Examining Teaching Activities in War-affected Schools: Advancing Transformative Praxis

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Abstract

This dissertation study aimed to understand factors that mediated teacher activities in war-affected school settings. Specifically, this study focused on examining ways in which inequitable, exclusionary processes were perpetuated, maintained, and legitimized in a war-affected school situated in the Northern part of Sri Lanka. This study was conceptualized using multiple critical theories that elucidated the ways in which inequities and exclusions worked in complex activity systems. This participatory design-based research study engaged teachers and students in critical reflection activities. This study found the ways in which disposability and disjunctures shaped teachers and students participation in school. In addition, this study illuminated the ways in which subjectivities were co-constructed in unequal fields of power. This study also mapped learning processes that took place in relation to critical reflections and explained the ways in which these emergent knowledges signaled transformative praxis. The implications of this study asserted the necessity of politicizing ability and engaging in justice-oriented praxis.

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Chapter 1: Significance

Public education is a (nation) state sponsored system that purports to manage and direct social, economic, and political conditions. These systems incorporate policies and practices predicated on a set of values and ideologies that mediate the direction school reform (Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Skrtic, 2013). In many, but not all, countries, democratic values such as equity, equality and inclusion are touted. In practice, education reform measures have persistently failed to provide equitable and inclusive education to the most vulnerable communities in society (Slee, 2011). These failures are especially visible in schools (re)established in the aftermath of war. Education systems struggle to account for and address inequities and exclusions that prevail in these settings (Corbett & Slee, 2000; Davies, 2011a; Vega & Bajaj, 2016).

In the aftermath of war, schools (re)established in lower to middle income settings are objectified through policy and practice. This is signaled in discourses around schooling that are saturated with narratives of stability, safety and normalcy that emphasize the importance of sustaining peace (Barakat, Connolly, Hardman & Sundaram, 2013; Buckland, 2005; Davies & Talbot, 2008; Novelli & Lopes Cardozo, 2008). Often governmental and non-governmental humanitarian relief and aid agencies follow Western-centric hegemonic scripts as a means of facilitating stability and normalcy (Goonatilake, 2006; Novelli & Lopez Cardozo, 2008; Özerdem & Podder, 2015). Unfortunately, these scripts do not center equity and inclusivity as essential components of facilitating stability, safety, and normalcy. Rather, they often function to help national governments re-assert their authority and legitimacy in areas previously ruled by rebel groups (Smith, 2005). These hegemonic scripts favor activities such as rebuilding schools and increasing enrollment over promoting meaningful changes centered on improving equity and inclusion. As a result, schools are re-established using discourses that favor the *appearance* of

normalcy and stability, focusing on outwardly tangible changes such as re-building schools, simply result in re-instituting schools in ways that emulate schools in other parts of the country that are not war-affected (Buckland,2005; DeVotta, 2004). These isomorphic tendencies maintain well-crafted facades that signal normalcy and stability, by leaving intact problematic policies and practices that perpetuate, maintain, and legitimize inequity and exclusion (DiMaggio & Powell, 2000).

In this chapter, I argue that current practices and policies in schools perpetuate and maintain inequitable and exclusionary processes. The argument that runs through this introduction critically evaluates the processes and practices that perpetuate, maintain and legitimize inequity and exclusion in war-affected schools. After describing the relationship between education and wars in the first section. I highlight these realities from a macro point of view. Then, I zoom into micro level learning and teaching activities within school systems. I detail how these activities perpetuate, maintain, and legitimize inequity and exclusion. I conclude the introduction by describing the significance of this dissertation study and state the problem this study addresses. In the sections that follow the problem statement, I explain the rationale and purpose for the study. Then I elaborate on the research questions that organize this study and my key commitments in undertaking this empirical study. I conclude this chapter by describing the conceptual framework that informs all aspects of this empirical study (Ravitch & Riggan, 2016). Key terms used in this study are described in Appendix A.

Examining the Complex Relationship between Education and War

Three features animate the complex relationship between education and war. First, I discuss what is known about this relationship in general and then describe how these complexities play out in the aftermath of war. I use examples from war-affected settings to

substantiate my claims. I conclude by contextualizing the fraught relationship between education and war within the context of Sri Lanka where this dissertation study took place.

How Sediments of War Settle within Education

How schools systems in war-affected settings function reflect the complex relationship between education and war; both are heavily mediated by poverty and ethnic tensions (Buckland, 2005). Education is often viewed as a panacea in mitigating wars in which the lack of education is believed to trigger conflict. Yet, reality contradicts this notion. Research substantiates that it is not the lack of education that fuels conflict. Rather, the inequities and exclusions that prevail in education are cited as the fuel of civil wars (Lange, 2012; Miller-Grandvaux, 2009). In fact, Lange (2012) found that in poor countries like Sri Lanka and Cyprus, the population is highly educated (literacy levels range above 90%). Furthermore, they have moderately effective social, political institutions like stable school systems and reasonably successful democracies. In these countries, deliberate acts perpetuate inequitable and exclusionary forms of education that animated ethnic tensions between fractions of the community (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Miller-Grandvaux, 2009; Smith, 2007).

Pre-war, these countries persistently struggled with providing equitable education. Disparities were visible in the dearth of adequate schools and trained teachers in marginalized communities (Davies, 2004; Novelli & Lopes Cardozo, 2008; Smith, 2005). These factors negatively impacted the ability for marginalized groups to generate sustainable household incomes and participate in political decision making (Davies, 2004; Smith 2005). As a result, inequities and exclusions perpetuated by policies and practices (both within and outside schools) accelerated the descended toward violent conflict. For instance, in Sri Lanka, the introduction of the Sinhala Only Act of 1956 promoted the ascendance and superiority of a Sinhala Buddhist

culture that went on to dominate the Tamil (mostly) Hindu minority for the second half of the 20th century through a 26 year long war that ended in 2009. This act discriminated against minorities by limiting their access to legal processes, civil service jobs, and higher education (DeVotta, 2004). Over time, these discriminatory policies and practices fueled deeply entrenched ethnic tensions. To date this policy is cited as one of the chief instigators of the war that began in 1983.

Examining the historicity of the relationship between war and education reveals the ways in which today's visible inequities and exclusions are products of colonial legacy. It is no coincidence that most of the countries that experienced civil conflicts since the mid-1950s were colonized by Western European powers. These colonizers introduced formal education systems that were exclusionary, privileging only a few locals (DeVotta, 2004). The divide and rule system introduced by colonizers often favored select ethnic groups over others. Distributing education opportunities inequitably was intentional in this well-orchestrated system that aimed to solicit the allegiance of select people groups (Ahmed & Bradford 2011; Smith 2005). Under British control, the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka was given more access to elite education. This resulted in civil service jobs being disproportionately allocated to educated Tamils (Rotberg, 2010). To date, this fact is repeatedly pointed out as a means of justifying the discriminatory constitution and its attended policies that favor Sinhala Buddhist hegemony[1].

These entrenched inequities and exclusions instantiated by colonial powers carried over, when

[1] Chapter II, section 9 of the present constitution states that "The Republic of Sri Lanka shall give to Buddhism the foremost place and accordingly it shall be the duty of the State to protect and foster the Buddha Sasana, while assuring to all religions the rights granted by Articles 10 and 14(1)(e)".

newly independent states set up their own education systems. They replicated these familiar systems that fostered exclusions and inequities (Davies, 2011a). In countries like Sri Lanka, Bosnia, and Northern Ireland, post-colonial education policies aimed to reverse the privilege and marginalization practices established by colonial authority (Smith, 2005). This resulted in equally harmful inequitable, exclusionary policies and practices couched in majority, nationalist ideologies further fueling ethnic tensions (Orjuela, 2003; Uyangoda, 2008). The fault lines of inequity and exclusion continue to be visible in the ways in which schools are established in the aftermath of and war (Davies, 2011b; Novelli & Lopez Cardozo, 2008). The historicity of the nature of inequity and exclusion shows that unless schools systems deliberately address these fault lines, they will continue to reappear in a mirrored of ways, even when schools are re-established after war. Specifically, in war-affected settings, schools that do not address inequity and exclusion will flounder at the same fault lines that carry over from pre-war conditions, seriously compromising the possibility of education systems to leverage stability. Therefore, how education is re-established schools in the aftermath of war must attend to the ways in which education has the potential to perpetuate, maintain and legitimize inequity and exclusion if true stability is to be achieved.

Education in War-affected School Contexts in the Aftermath of War

Post-war, schools are often burdened by various academic and non-academic obligations, geared toward establishing and sustaining stability (Kirk & Winthorp, 2009; Miller-Grandvaux, 2009). The eminent threat that 40% of post-conflict nations relapse into war within ten years (World Bank, 2009), heightens the attention placed on schools which are viewed as social institutions that can facilitate stability. As such, post-war initiatives typically encompass rebuilding infrastructure, increasing enrollment, introducing curriculum, and providing quality

instruction which can facilitate improved educational outcomes (Buckland, 2005; Winthorp & Kirk, 2008). For example, in addition to conducting regular school activities, war-affected schools are tasked with additional responsibilities such as conducting programs that seek to mitigate the impact of war (i.e., landmine, HIV/AIDS awareness, peace education, psychosocial programs) (Davies, 2011a; Novelli & Lopes Cardozo, 2008).These tasks overburden faculty and administrators who attempt to meet all of these demands, exerting enormous pressure on school systems that are struggling to recuperate their fiscal and human resources in the aftermath of a 26 year civil war (Buckland, 2005).

Post-war restoration often reproduces pre-war conditions. Human and infrastructure fragility in war-affected settings remain for years after the cessation of active combat. Overtime, fragility overwhelms the education system's ability to sustain its functions (Burns & Lawrie, 2015). Schools become highly dependent on outside aid and expertise to make up for the shortage of resources in terms of human capital and funding (Davies, 2004; Smith, 2005). This dependency on outside support exerts pressure on unstable, often corrupt local and national governments to comply with international rights-based requirements. In response to additional mandates, local actors maneuver activities that signal compliance by performing obligatory rituals such as writing reports, creating inventories of resources, and conducting training workshops. These activities obscure and ignore addressing more pressing issues such as historically embedded inequities and exclusions that can facilitate meaningful change (Buckland, 2005; Miller- Grandvaux, 2009; Mundy & Dryden-Peterson, 2011). Consequently, harmful policies and processes continue to persist in newly established war-affected schools, reproducing pre-war inequities and exclusions (Davies, 2011b; Smith, 2007). For instance, the constitution of South Sudan prioritized social cohesion and integration after the devastating war that ensured its

secession from Sudan in 2011.

Despite the outward valorization of social cohesion, Sudan's constitution mandated English as the language of instruction in schools. The historical significance of English is strongly tied to the identity of South Sudan where English symbolized the language of resistance against the predominantly Arabic Sudan (Hammond, 2013; Sharkey, 2012). However, a single language of instruction is problematic in a country where the 20 largest linguistic groups form 90% of the population (Spronk, 2014). Language based inequalities affect repatriated citizens, refugees, and internally displaced children as instantiated in disproportionately high drop-out and low enrollment rates. This English only mandate limits access to education, leaving the most vulnerable students perpetually stuck in poverty, while a small population of elite South Sudanese leverage their knowledge of English for social and economic mobility (Hammond, 2013). Prewar inequities and exclusions are thus reproduced by failing to create meaningful changes that center equity and inclusion.

In the aftermath of war, schools contend with a complex range of sociocultural, historical realities and become complicit in mirroring societal inequities and exclusions (Handy & Annamma, in review; Smith 2005). Teachers and students alike operate within the social, cultural, historical structures that valorize hierarchical arrangements based on ethnic status, caste associations, rural isolation, gender disparities and disability constructions (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007; Grech, 2011; Erevelles & Minear, 2010). For example, caste identities have historically stratified social and educational outcomes in many of the Northern communities in Sri Lanka (Mampilly, 2011; Tambiah, 1986). During the war, caste discrimination was out-lawed by the militant groups, thus were not visible overtly (Stokke, 2006). However, post war, caste identities that stratify the community at large have re-emerged in schools, resulting in

legitimizing pernicious forms of discrimination that includes ability tracking and violent-discipline (Handy & Annamma, in review; Silva, Sivapragasam & Thanges, 2009). Institutional constraints negatively impact schools in the aftermath of war. Curriculum introduced after wars are often considered controversial, irrelevant, and culturally inappropriate (Dicum 2008; Kim, Moses, Jang & Wils, 2011). Curriculum reforms often focus on high stakes exams yet pay little to no attention to the medium of instruction, students' disrupted learning trajectories, compromising both access and quality of education (Cardozo & Hoeks, 2015; Davies, 2004; Guimbert et al. 2008; Moyi, 2012; Smith 2005). For example, Portuguese remained the medium of instruction in post-conflict Timor-Leste, despite Tetum being the dominant language, thus limiting meaningful learning opportunities for most students (Shah, 2012). Similarly, primary schools are prioritized over secondary schools in post-conflict settings, despite the reality that an increase in secondary school enrollments have been found to decrease the probability of war re-lapses (Buckland, 2005; Miller-Grandvaux, 2009; Novelli & Lopes Cardozo 2008; Thyne, 2006). This institutional constraint is often justified by pointing out how secondary schools have higher operating costs and require more highly educated teachers, both of which are scarce in war-affected settings (Buckland, 2005; Davies, 2004; Trani, Kett, Bakhshi & Bailey, 2011; Zuilkowski & Betancourt 2014).

Institutional constraints are also apparent in the types of special programs introduced in the aftermath of war. They include psycho-social care, counselling, peace education, conflict resolution, academic-recovery with mixed results in terms of the programs' utility and sustainability (Davies, 2004; King, 2008; Seymore, 2014; Winthrop & Kirk, 2008). While these programs have been useful, they are also known to increase teacher workload, demand irrelevant overtime, and detract from academic work (Balasooriya, Perera & Wijetunge, 2004; Harris &

Sass, 2011). Institutional constraints are not limited to special programs. They influence regular academic demands as well. Academic work is often predicated upon preparing students for high-stakes examinations (Davies, 2005; Dicum, 2008; Kim, Moses, Jang & Wils, 2011). War-affected Youth are required to compete equally in these exams which were highly competitive and difficult, as high scores are needed to further their education and realize better employment opportunities (Kim, Moses, Jang & Wils, 2011). Davies (2004) criticizes this narrow scope of knowledge arguing how they reinforce bad pedagogical practices that perpetuate various forms of inequities and exclusions.

In the aftermath of war, teachers working in war-affected schools face a confluence of stressors in and outside school settings (Wolf et al., 2015). These teachers who are themselves recovering from war, are often over-worked, receive low or infrequent compensation, and are given poor professional recognition (Asimeng-Boahene, 2003; Kirk, 2004; Seymore, 2014; Weldon, 2010). Furthermore, they received inadequate professional development opportunities, showed poor accountability, and lacked autonomy and voice in determine their work conditions (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007; Gujarado, 2011). Often teachers are positioned as unmotivated individuals who enact poor teaching practices and engage in various forms of misconduct (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007; Handy & Annamma, in review; Winthorp & Kirk, 2008). As expected, these realties negatively impact the learning experiences of youth in war-affected schools. In addition to problems with their teachers, youth are challenged by poverty (Davies & Talbot 2008; Kim, Moses, Jang & Wils, 2011; Winthrop & Kirk 2008), disablement (Guimbert, Miwa & Nguyen, 2008; Trani, Kett, Bakhshi & Bailey, 2011), and, high, unrealistic academic expectations (Davies & Talbot, 2008; Moyi, 2012; Willis & Nagel, 2014).

The ways in which teachers interact with youth in conflict-affected schools are further

mediated by discourses that position youth as vulnerable and dangerous populations that are ‘at risk’ (Özerdem & Podder, 2015). In Sri Lanka for instance, youth political disenfranchisement and activism has been attributed to many of the violent conflicts that occurred within the country (Rogers, Spencer & Uyangoda, 1998). These discourses become even more problematic when applied to youth affected by war, who are often associated with violence and crime in war-affected settings (Sommers, 2003). These perceptions either infantilized or demonized youth, locating deficiency attributed to being dis/abled by trauma (Handy & Kozleski, in review; Özerdem & Podder, 2015). Discourses that position teachers and youth as deficient, results in a vicious circular blame game where teachers locate deficits in students, and to a lesser extent, students locate deficits in teachers. For instance, teachers position students as lazy, unintelligent, and uninterested, while students describe teachers as uncaring, dangerous and unfair (Handy& Annamma, in review). These vicious circular discourses result in diminishing meaningful learning opportunities for youth who are multiply marginalized.

The War in Sri Lanka and its Relationship to Education

The thirty-year civil war in Sri Lanka between the government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tamil Tigers of Elam (LTTE) an organized, fascist group ended in 2009 (Hoole, 2001). A severe military offensive was enacted by State authorities that destroyed strong holds in the de facto state set up by the militia (Loganathan, 1996). The war was a culmination of ethnic differences and its intricate relationship with the country’s’ colonial legacy (Uyangoda, 2008). The British in particular, introduced ethno-nationalist ideologies into the state apparatus, perpetuating social and economic inequities based on ethnic belonging (Wickremasinghe, 2006). Views about ethnic superiority, exceptionality exclusionary nationalism were strongly related to the civilizing mission of the colonial regime, which fashioned racial and ethnic otherness that

constructed exclusionary ideologies (De Votta, 2004; Mampilly, 2011; Wickremasinge, 2006). Although the transfer of power from the British regime to local elites was relatively peaceful, ethnic tensions that fueled beneath the surface during British rule became profoundly animated shortly after gaining independence in 1948 (Mampilly, 2011; Somasundaram, 2014). During the transition from British control, Sri Lanka was economically stable, but ethnic and class divides became intensified as the population grew and the economic market of cash crops crashed, destabilizing democratic processes. These circumstances inflamed elite instigated nationalist sentiments that excluded minority rights beginning the decent toward Sri Lanka becoming a failed state (Somadundaram, 2014; Uyangoda, 2008). These festering animosities resulted in intermittent riots and youth insurrections that continued to destabilize the country and culminated into a fully blown guerilla type civil war in 1983.

The Vanni region in which this study was conducted, historically was a sparsely populated jungle area where agriculture and fishing settlements were pre-dominantly Tamil. In the 1970s and 1980s unemployed, educated Tamil youth from the hill country and south were settled in this region. The disenfranchisement of these populations made it possible for militant groups to recruit and build highly regimented group of combatants (Mampilly, 2011). In the early 1990s at the peak of the war, people from the Jaffna peninsula moved into Vanni willingly and, sometimes, otherwise (Somasundaram, 2010). While the LTTE built a de-facto state, the rest of Sri Lanka began to construct a narrative in which all those who belonged to the Tamil ethnic minority were positioned as militant, separatist or LTTE sympathizers. These narratives prevailed, despite only a small subset of this minority group identified with the separatist ideology of the LTTE. After the war, authoritarian leadership models gained currency as Sri Lanka became one of the most militarized nations in the South Asian region (De Mel, 2007). The

Northern Province continues to be militarized encumbered by martial law with high levels of surveillance that leads to detainments and disappearances (Somasundaram, 2010).
During the war the de-facto state set up by the LTTE worked with the State government in providing education to children and youth (Mampilly, 2011). Once the war ended, the state government and provincial authorities took control and re-established the present school system. The schools that were re-established after the war largely mirrored the Sri Lankan public education system, where schools are divided along class, ethnic, and urban-rural lines (Novelli & Lopes Cardozo, 2008). This continues to cause wide disparities in the quality of schooling offered in war-affected settings (Wickrema & Colenso, 2003).

The education system in Sri Lanka exemplifies the complexities that animate the relationship between education and war. It reveals the ways in which inequities and exclusions run through its entire educational tapestry. Despite this legacy, schools in war-affected areas in the North are re-established with very little attention to the perpetuation, maintenance, and legitimization of the various forms of inequities and exclusions within and outside schools (Smith & Vaux, 2003; Smith, 2007). Re-establishing schools in ways that do not reify exclusions and inequities remains a challenge in the war-affected school settings.

Significance of the Study

Newly re-established schools in post-war settings are said to provide a window of opportunity in which teachers can act as change agents primarily by transforming their practices (Kirk, 2004; Osman & Kirk, 2001). This is because teachers and their teaching practices are found to have a profound influence in how students experience school (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). This study is conceptually and methodologically significant in improving our understanding of teachers and their teaching practices in war-affected schools. Through this

study I am to discover the ways in which inequities and exclusions are perpetuated, maintained, and legitimized through teaching activities war-affected schools.

Conceptually this study is significant in that it is framed within an expansive conceptualization of inclusive education that centers equity and inclusivity (Naraian, 2017; Slee, 2009). This study introduces a possible way of disrupting inequitable exclusionary practices that marginalize youth is by paying attention to the ways in which these practices are perpetuated, maintained. and legitimized (Davies, 2011a; Smith, 2007). Furthermore, the identification of these activities and the possible ways to disrupt them favor insider voices instead of abstracted, outsider evaluative points of view. In invoking the importance of decolonizing the ways in which teachers and their activities in in war-affected settings viewed, this study created opportunities for teachers to conjure ways of transforming practices (Greene, 1978; Smith, 2012; Miller, Kulkarni & Kushner, 2006). While it is understood that teachers cannot carry the complete onus in transforming school systems, this study considered ways in which to allow teachers to lead the conversations that might bring about meaningful change, providing agentic control over how teachers and their teaching activities are viewed (Sannino, Engeström & Lemos, 2016). This study took a systemic view that included subjective, socio-cultural, historical, and institutional factors in understanding inequity and exclusion in war-affected school settings (Slee, 2011). Teachers were involved in the process of identifying and making meaning of their own subjective dispositions, institutional structural factors, and socio-cultural historical constraints. They explained how these complex factors mediated teaching and by extension the learning experiences of students who were marginalized.

This study was significant methodologically as well. This study was designed using the principles of participatory design-based research (Bang & Vossoughi, 2016). Participatory

design-based research creates allowances for activities to be introduced into the research design that shape the ways in which participants engage in the study, while allowing them ample control over the data collection and analysis. In conducting a thorough review of existing literature on war-affected schools, I did not identify studies that incorporated ethnographic methods with participatory action research grounded in participatory design-based research. Therefore, this study provides ways in which to conduct rigorous research using multiple data sources while making that knowledge available to the participants during a research study in the form of on-going professional development (Erickson, 2006). This methodological stance allowed teachers to be involved in the collection and analysis of the data ensuring that their perspectives were prioritized. Furthermore, by participating in critical reflection activities, this methodology created spaces where teachers can lead the agenda in transforming their teaching activities.

Statement of the Problem

Teaching multiply-marginalized youth in war-affected contexts are fraught with challenges. Some of these challenges are unique to war related experiences such as bereavement, and excessive exposure to violence. They also include other general learning and teaching dilemmas such as state assessments and irrelevant, unresponsive curricula (Miller-Grandvaux, 2009). Research findings point toward the uncritical sensibilities of teachers, particularly in the ways in which they engage in teaching activities. These sensibilities mediate how they view themselves and their teaching practices (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003). These views are mediated by the ways in which they are socialized into teaching, and by socio-cultural and institutional constraints that organize teaching activities (Kozleski & Handy, 2017). While it is understood that these factors mediate teacher experiences, there is very little information available that analyzes how these factors mediate teaching activities. Supporting teachers who engage in

teaching activities in war-affected schools requires a deep understanding of the ways in which various factors shape how they make meaning of their practices (Kirk & Winthorp, 2008). Therefore, engaging teachers in ways that illuminate the complex factors that mediate their teaching activities are imperative in order to bring about meaningful changes in school systems (Weldon, 2010).

The lack of in-depth knowledge available as to the factors that mediate how teachers understand themselves and their teaching practices allow for multiple forms of inequities and exclusions to become ubiquitously perpetuated, maintained and legitimized in war-affected schools. This results in forming yet another iteration of inequities that pervades education in war-affected, low-middle income settings (Davies, 2011a; la Cava & Lytle, 2006). This study addresses this problem by examining the ways in which multiple factors mediate the ways teachers understand themselves (i.e., their roles, responsibilities and subjectivities) and their teaching activities (Holland & Lave, 2001; Gee, 2001; Lave, 1996).

Any discussion that begins to address the issue of supporting teachers in bringing about meaningful change toward disrupting unhelpful discourses, tend to objectify, pathologize and vilify teachers, students, and interactions within learning spaces (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Özerdem & Podder, 2015). These problematic discourses do not provide meaningful ways in which to understand why teachers do what they do, nor does it provide any guidance in terms of how to support teachers in transforming their teaching activities. Deficit oriented discourses allow inadequate western-centric prescriptive impositions of professional development to pervade these settings. They result in erasing valuable knowledges and sensibilities teachers living these conditions bring to present understandings of war-affected schools (Berkvens, Kalyanpur, Kuiper & Van den Akker, 2012; González, Moll & Amanti, 2006). This lack inhibits

teachers from centering equity and inclusion, thus limiting access, opportunity, achievement, and participation of multiply-marginalized students, while perpetuating harmful discourses of what constitutes ability or disability (Annamma, Connor & Ferri, 2013; Artiles, Kozleski, & Waitoller, 2011; Naraian, 2013; Rao & Kalyanpur, 2015). This study prioritizes teacher voice as a means of disrupting pathologizing discourses.

Finally, supporting teachers to examine themselves and their teaching activities is strongly recommended for war-affected schools, but researchers note that these opportunities do not transpire automatically (Buckland, 2005; Smith, 2005). They recommend that critical reflection must be intentionally weaved into the ways in which teachers are supported (Murnane & Ganimian, 2014). For example, conventional in-service professional development workshops were found to be inadequate in bringing about meaningful change in a South African school, until these programs addressed issues of inequity and exclusion through critical reflection (Jansen, 2009). This study created opportunities for teachers to engage in critical reflection activities enhancing ways in which to better support in-service teachers in war-affected settings.

Rationale for the Study

Illuminating Factors that Mediate Teachers and Teaching Activities. While educational outcomes that determine youths' educational access, participation, achievement ,and opportunities are not solely dependent on teachers and their activities, they significantly influence their learning experiences (Darling-Hammond, 2004). In fact, Murnane & Ganiman (2014) found that changing instructional practices was the single most effective way of improving student achievement in low to middle income countries. Although teachers may have little influence on what students learn, they significantly shape how students learn, making instructional practices a key lever in transforming teaching activities (Sanders, Wright & Horn,

1997). Despite these realities, there is very little research that systematically study teachers and their teaching activities in war-affected schools (Wolf et al., 2015). A better understanding of teachers' lives and their practices is crucial, particularly considering how these teachers may perpetuate inequitable and exclusionary processes that hinder learning for multiply-marginalized youth (Waitoller & Artiles, 2013).

The scarcity of research that illuminates the ways in which to understand how subjective, institutional, socio-cultural, historical factors mediate the ways in which in-service teachers understand themselves and their teaching activities in war-affected settings, leads to poor conceptualizations of ways in which to support them in transforming their activities by centering equity and inclusion (Berkvens et al., 2012; Engeström, 2006). These poor conceptualizations perpetuate, maintain, and legitimize inequitable teaching activities that marginalize youth who navigate multiple challenges in war-affected school settings (Vega & Bajaj, 2016). This study contributes to existing research by providing an in-depth understanding of the factors that mediate the ways in which teachers understand themselves and their teaching activities by foregrounding equity and inclusion as organizing lenses.

Decolonizing Knowledges. Historicity illuminates how current school systems are shaped by colonial vestiges (that are not only foreign/alien but dominating and imposing) (Dei, 2000), while modernity highlights how these vestiges are maintained in the ways learning and teaching is conceptualized (Mignolo, 2007; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Coloniality positions education systems that are outside the Western educational ideological "norm" as deficient, always playing catch up with a system that included multiple ways of knowing and being (Dei & Lordon, 2016). War-affected settings continue to perpetuate colonization through the seepage from the past as well as replication in newer forms of modernity (Lugones, 2010). Colonial and neo-colonial/modernity

ideologies, values, beliefs, practice and processes pervade conflict-affected settings in two specific ways. First, war-affected settings that were previously colonized carry the vestiges of their colonial past by shaping how learning and teaching is conceptualized (Weber, 2007). When schools are re-established in the aftermath of war, these colonial influences remain unquestioned, circulating Western-centric ideologies perpetuate, maintain, and legitimize inequity and exclusion (Dei & Lordon, 2016). Secondly, because education in war-affected settings are primarily supported by Western aid and humanitarian agencies, the ideologies that determine the reconstruction of education is heavily mediated by modernity (Kirk & Winthorp, 2008; Miller, Kulkarni & Kushner, 2006). These discourses determine how schools should be set up and for what purpose, often pandering to international schooling standards that have little to no relevance in improving equity and inclusivity in war-affected settings.

Studies that aim to understand learning and teaching processes in war-affected settings must be situated in robust theories that critique the colonial investment that shaped and continues to shape education in these settings. They must seek to decolonize hegemonic knowledge predicated on Western centric views (Dei & Lordan, 2016). The use of the term knowledges is a decolonizing feminist move, which resists objective knowledge constructions that disregard the situated, pluralistic ways in which knowledge is generated and utilized (Harraway, 1991). Knowledges acknowledge that all individuals and communities participating in sociocultural, historical activity systems are knowledge generators, bringing to light the full weight of their situated realities and histories (Rose, 1997). Recognizing the distributed nature of knowledges disrupts Western-centric hegemony over who what is considered knowledge and who can participate in its construction.

Western-centric ideologies are visible in the discourses of pathology that circulate in war

affected settings (Handy & Kozleski, in review), together with an aid industry that structures education (Abadzi, 2004; Miller, Kulkarni & Kushner, 2006). These discourses become even more pronounced through discriminatory policies and distribution of resources predicated upon these assumed deficiencies (Davies, 2004). For example, the examination centered curriculum embedded in schools today originated with British colonizers perpetuate, maintain, and legitimize a sorting system that is grounded in highly competitive exclusionary practices, where attaining higher levels of education and its consequent benefits were limited to a few (Dei & Lordan, 2016; Smith, 2012). Unfortunately, despite disrupted learning trajectories caused by the war, teachers in war affected settings are required to prepare students to compete for education opportunities with those whose lives were not directly affected (Vega & Bajaj, 2016). Therefore, common practices such as tracking students, become covert tactics where ability-based determinations are made to systematically exclude specific groups of students from gaining access to meaningful education (Davies, 2011b; Handy & Annamma, in review). These realities reveal how mirroring Western-centric intellectual traditions are harmful in war-affected settings. From a Western-centric point of view, educational access, participation, opportunity, and the discourse of ableism are seen as commodities to be coveted and protected (Dei & Lordan, 2016; Mitchell & Snyder,2015). Allowing these views to circulate uncritically creates further marginalization of students. As such, this study is intentionally framed using decolonizing critical theories that highlight the commitment to decolonizing the ways in which teachers and their teaching practices are understood.

Resisting Deficit Positioning of Teachers and Students. This study emphasizes the importance of resisting deficit positioning of teachers and students in war-affected schools. A pernicious vestige of coloniality can be detected in the ways in which individuals and

communities that to not easily conform to Western centric ideologies of education are positioned as deficient through dehumanizing discourses (Dei & Lordon, 2016; Paris & Winn, 2014; Weber, 2007). Teachers in war-affected settings are rarely viewed as competent, although they are often seen as important mediators of student wellbeing (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007; Gelkopf & Berger 2009). Teachers in war-affected settings are often positioned as deficient through pathologizing discourses (i.e., traumatized), and are deemed lazy, truant, unmotivated and corrupt (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007). While these realities do exist in war-affected school settings, homogenizing all teachers by locating deficits within them is vacuous because it fails to recognize the contextual factors that mediate teaching activities. Instead it favors a-priori, abstract negative assumptions about individuals affected by war and their activities, reifying deficit discourses about teachers who work in extremely challenging conditions (Kirk & Winthorp, 2008; Mohanty, 2003, Spivak, 1988).

Resisting deficit positioning is not synonymous with ignoring the problematic teaching activities teachers engage in. Rather, it is about creating a deep understanding of the factors that mediate the ways in which teachers understand themselves and their teaching activities. Resisting deficit positioning considers that teaching activities in war-affected school settings are situated within specific sociocultural, historical contexts that impact life pathways of students and teachers in profound ways (Van Ommering, 2017). Extant research documents a litany of problematic teaching activities such as didactic teaching methods (Elbert et al 2009; Dicum, 2008; Willis & Nagel, 2014), unreasonable academic expectations (Dicum, 2008; Guimbert, Miwa, Nguyen, 2008; Willis & Nagel, 2014), unresponsive uniformity in teaching practices (King, 2008) and harsh discipline (Dicum, 2008; Haines, 2014; Handy & Annamma, in review). Teachers reportedly made very little accommodations for students who were struggling in the

classroom especially those from ethnic minorities and students with disabilities (Trani, Kett, Bakhshi & Bailey, 2011; Sullivan 2009).

While the prevalence of these practices is undeniable, there is little to no research that specifically examines the factors that mediate these practices from the point of view of the teachers. This is indeed surprising considering the strong relationship between teacher competencies and student outcomes (Cochran-Smith & Lytle,1999). For example, in Sri Lanka teachers' poor knowledge in content area and attendant pedagogical practices, directly correlated with students' low achievement in that subject area (World Bank, 2011; Perera, 2011). Students' poor achievement and teachers' poor instructional practices leave both parties demoralized, further deteriorating the quality of instruction and student outcomes, setting in motion vicious cycles of poor learning and teaching (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). By engaging in these uncritical teaching activities, multiple forms of inequitable and exclusionary practices are rationalized and legitimized, and hinder youths' access, achievement, opportunity, and participation in meaningful education (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003). In order for these cycles of exclusion and inequities to be disrupted, the factors that mediate these teaching practices must be examined through lenses that advance equity and inclusivity. They must be examined by giving teachers opportunities to reflect on their teaching activities in ways that gear teachers toward transformative praxis (Freire, 1998). This study created opportunities to resist deficit positioning of teachers and their students by ensuring that teacher voices are heard in ways that brings to bear the full complexity of teaching in war-affected settings (Lopez Cardozo & Hoeks, 2015; Van Ommering, 2017).

Centering Critical Points of View in Research Agendas. Centering critical stances must be prioritized in order to capture the complex ways in which power and knowledge

circulate in war-affected settings (Silkin & Hendrie, 1997; Helbardt, Hellmann-Rajanayagam & Korff, 2010; Wood, 2006). Examining teaching activities in service of equity and inclusivity in war-affected settings necessitates a critical stance that is invested in interrogating power disparities (Freire, 1993). These considerations influence the role of research in terms of how it is conducted and for what purpose. Examining teachers and their teaching activities in war-affected school settings that center critical points of view interrogates power relations along with other socio-cultural, historical, and subjective realities that shape the ways in teachers engage in their spaces. A rigorous empirical study that seeks to provide a deep understanding of teaching activities in war-affected settings must consider power in its various institutional, socio-cultural, and subjective forms. It must reveal how power disparities stifle equitable and inclusive learning opportunities, by questioning who the decision makers are, who is silenced and who carries the weight of oppression (Vega & Bajaj, 2016).

Centering critical stances require that the methodologies used provide holistic, in-depth views of the complexities that shape learning and teaching (Boyden & de Berry, 2004; Buckland, 2005). These methods must advance decolonization and dehumanization of those that participate in research activities (Lorde, 2012; Paris & Winn, 2014; Smith, 2012) This utilizes research methods that provide ample opportunities to center critical work by incorporating ethnographic inquiry with participatory action research both of which are well suited for conducting critical research (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Campbell & Gregor, 2004; Erickson, 2006). Unlike typical ethnographic work, this study introduces activities such as educational journey maps, critical video reflections and written reflections in addition to conducting interviews, focus groups, participant observations and document analysis. Here, traditional ethnographic methods were incorporated with participatory action research methods to provide an in depth understanding of

the complexities that mediate teaching practices. By incorporating these methods using participatory design-based research, teachers were given multiple opportunities and modalities to learn from these research activities by sharing their knowledge and insights with the researcher and with one another during the study (Erickson, 2006). This ensured that critical stances were prioritized in every aspect of the investigation.

Creating Professional Development Opportunities during Research In war-affected settings it is common for research studies to be conducted as a part of in-service professional development (Bekerman & Zymbylas, 2010). Teachers report that on-site professional development is useful, despite having ambivalent outcomes in terms of changing practices (Hammerness, Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). On the one hand professional development improved teacher perceptions of their own capacities and improved attitudes toward students (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007; Forlin, Keen & Barrett, 2008; Kosko & Wilkins, 2009; Kruijer, 2010), created opportunities to solve problems of practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999), resulted in evaluating pedagogical approaches (Cochran-Smith, Davis & Fries, 2004), built mentoring relationships (Feinman-Nemser & Parker, 1993) and improved teaching practices (Klinger, Ahwee, Pilonieta & Mendenze, 2003). Glewwe, Hanushek, Humpage and Ravina (2011) found that in-service professional development had a positive impact on student learning and improved test scores.

On the other hand, in-service professional development is criticized by teachers for its traditional workshop and trainings. This model is deemed inadequate in improving teacher practice and student achievement (Wei, Darling-Hammond & Adamson, 2010). Despite being eager to gain support to improve their teaching practices (Frisoli, 2013), teachers in war-affected settings viewed professional development as ineffective due to being conducted by those who've

never been teachers, and those who do not understand the complexities of teaching in war-affected settings (Berkvens et al., 2012; Burns & Lawrie, 2015; OECD, 2008). In addition, professional development in war-affected contexts are criticized for being episodic with poor-follow up (Burns & Lawrie, 2015). In addressing these concerns, this study situates its activities as an opportunity to provide teachers with professional development opportunities. Notably, this study does not introduce prescriptive, pre-packaged professional development content, nor does it follow the workshop type implementation model. Rather these activities center teacher voices by recognizing their capacity to critically reflecting upon the ways in which to transform teaching activities. The professional development activities introduced in this study favors an authentic ground up vision of professional development that could be sustained even when the study is completed.

Purpose of the Study

This study was aimed at providing an in-depth understanding how institutional, socio-cultural and subjective factors mediate the ways teachers understand themselves and teaching activities in war-affected settings. Specifically, these mediating factors were viewed through lenses that foreground inclusivity and equity. These factors are examined in ways that reveal the practices and processes that perpetuate, maintain, and legitimize inequity and exclusion. This study was interested in the ways in which teachers and their lived realities and institutional factors came together in shaping their teaching activities that were equitable and inclusive (or not), influencing education trajectories of marginalized youth (Vega & Bajaj,2016). The goal was not only to provide an in-depth description of mediating factors, but to also provide an in-depth analysis of how these mediating factors collectively shape learning and teaching experiences of teachers and students.

This study provided opportunities for teachers who work with marginalized youth to critically reflect upon their own practices, within a framework of inclusivity and equity. These critical reflection activities facilitated processes where teachers envisioned the ways in which to advance equity and inclusion through their teaching. This study sought to decolonize western/euro-centric ways in which war-affected school settings and the activities therein were understood (Özerdem & Podder, 2015). In drawing from teachers' situated experiences and providing teachers the opportunities to critically reflect upon the ways in which they understood themselves and their teaching activities, this study provides ways in which to support teachers in (re)imagining their activities in inclusive and equitable ways. This study explored the utility of incorporating critical reflection within the ethnographic research agenda aimed at providing professional development opportunities that are sustainable and contextually sensitive (Bervekens et al., 2012).

Research Questions

This study examined the factors that mediated the ways in which teachers understood themselves and their teaching activities (Veresov, 2014; Vygotsky, 1987). In keeping with the purpose and significance of this study, three research questions framed this study: (a) what factors mediate the ways in which teachers understand themselves and their teaching activities, and how do these factors mediate these understandings?*;* (b) how are inequitable and exclusionary teaching activities perpetuated, maintained and legitimized in war-affected school settings?*;* and (c) how do teachers engage in critical reflection in ways that advance transformative praxis centering equity and inclusion?

Defining Key Commitments

Inclusive Education: Equity and Inclusivity Equity and inclusion are intentionally held unsteadily apart, recognizing that both concepts do not necessarily converge easily in inclusive

education policy and practice (Artiles, Kozleski, Dorn & Christensen, 2006; Artiles, Kozleski & Waitoller, 2011). Equity and inclusion project local and global variations depending on how they are taken up in socio-culturally situated contexts (Ainscow, Booth & Dyson, 2006; Artiles & Dyson, 2005). Inclusive education in the west developed as a means of improving traditional special education services offered specifically for students with disabilities. Its vision has expanded steadily incorporating ways in which to address access, participation and achievement for all students (Artiles & Kozleski, 2016; Kozleski, Artiles & Waitoller, 2013). Outside the West, inclusive education at times follow western conceptualizations, but digressions appear especially in third world, under-resourced nations (Naraian, 2013). For example, in countries like Sri Lanka, these digressions are predicated upon realities where a large majority of children regardless of disability status receive inadequate access to education (Handy, 2017). Fundamentally, expansive views of inclusive education remain committed to eliminating inequitable, exclusionary policies and practices that disadvantage students who navigate multiply-marginalized intersections (Naraian, 2013; Slee, 2011).

My commitment to inclusive education in this study is aimed at examining the prevalence of exclusionary, inequitable teaching activities in war-affected schools (Buckland, 2005; Corbett & Slee, 2000; Davies, 2004; Lopez Cardozo, 2008; Winthorp & Kirk, 2008). In the aftermath of war, the opportunity to re-establish schools provides an important opportunity to set up schools in inclusive and equitable ways, yet, there is no concerted effort put forward in advancing this endeavor (Buckland, 2005; Smith, 2007). A school system that is set up without centering equity and inclusivity runs the risk circulating problematic discourses that perpetuate, maintain, and legitimize inequity and exclusion (Artiles & Kozleski, 2016; Haines, 2014; Handy & Annmma, in review; Skrtic & Kent, 2013; Seymore, 2014). For instance, in Sri Lanka public schools set up

post-war, focus on providing universal access to education. Assuming universal access education will eradicate caste, class divisions that are deeply entrenched in these communities was ill founded (Davies, 2011b). Unfortunately, by ignoring how access is deeply intertwined with equity and inclusion these schools adopted discriminatory practices against the most vulnerable groups in their communities (Handy & Annamma, in review; Silva, Sivapragasam & Thanges, 2009). In recognizing these trends, this study centers equity and inclusion and its precarious balance by rejecting standardized, Western-centric conceptualizations of inclusive education (Naraian, 2017). This study recognizes the importance of equity and inclusivity in schools as being a part of a larger political endeavor (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Slee, 2011; Skrtic, 2005). I believe that foregrounding this political commitment in schools, is a step toward advancing equity and inclusion in the country.

Critical Reflection

Freire (1993, 1998), introduced the concept of critical consciousness or conscientization (conscientização) as a pedagogical stance. This stance centers critical perspectives by examining power, privilege, and disadvantage in education. Within this construct, meaningful learning occurs as result of teachers and learners becoming aware of socio-cultural and historical factors that shape their day to day life. Meaning, by giving teachers the opportunity to critically evaluate their practices, teachers acquire a deep and expansive understanding of themselves and their teaching practices (Freire, 1993). They evaluate themselves and their activities by paying attention to the ways in which they may perpetuate, maintain, and legitimize inequity and exclusion. Engaging in critical-self-reflection is continuous iterative process, developing critical sensibilities in teachers allowing them to interpret their teaching activities through the lenses of equity and inclusion.

Despite the time-tested relevance of critical reflection mediating change, the lack of opportunities for teachers to critically reflect upon their roles, responsibilities, subjectivities, and teaching activities in war-affected settings is remarkable (Bekerman & Zembylas, 2013; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Colenso, 2005; Davies, 2011; Winthorp & Kirk, 2008). Critical reflection that is mediated by their situated knowledges is crucial in improving teaching activities (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). These processes are guided by robust pedagogical theories that advance equity and inclusivity by foregrounding systemic and subjective realties that mediate teaching (Cole 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991). This study was committed to advancing opportunities whereby teachers can engage in critical consciousness raising through reflexivity (Freire, 1998; Giroux, 2009; Greene, 1978).

The Context: Schools in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka

Much like the rest of the Island, exclusions and inequities outside schools are reflected within schools in the Northern Province (la Cava & Lytle, 2006; Thyne, 2006). At present, Mullaitivu and Killinochi, the former militia de-facto states, are among the poorest areas with high poverty and unemployment indices (Household Income and Expenditure Survey, 2012-2013). These areas remain highly militarized with high levels of surveillance and policing (Azmi, Burn & Lund, 2013; DeVotta, 2004). These socio-economic along with socio-cultural issues, such as deep ethnic divisions and entrenched caste systems, further marginalize teachers and students in schools in war-affected areas, perpetuating various forms of inequitable discriminatory exclusions within school systems (Colenso, 2005; Handy & Annamma, in review; Davies, 2011b; Miller-Grandvaux, 2009).

According to the 2016 School census there are 126 schools functioning in the District where this study was conducted. Here, 64 schools offer secondary education. However, 57 of

these schools house less than 100 students. Enrollment declines as grades progress, where on average the student to teacher ratio is 18:1. A total of 1,855 teachers serve in these schools, where 1,162 are trained teachers with no undergraduate diplomas. Only 500 have academic degrees, and about 100 teachers fall into an uncertain 'other' category, where their educational status is unknown. Northern Education Systems Review (2014) noted that only about 46% of the secondary schools prepare students for National exams. This review noted that the number of students in class reduced drastically as the grades progressed toward matriculation exams. These sparsely populated schools cannot be closed or merged with other schools due to being situated in remote isolated communities. Keeping sparsely populated secondary schools functioning, is symbolically relevant to communities. Secondary schools mark the community as one that is invested in higher levels of education, regardless of the dismal number of students in secondary level classes. In 2014, five years after the war ended some classes had less than three students (Northern Education Systems Review, 2014). These realities keep sparsely populated schools functioning despite the inequitable allocation of resources and the inefficient use of limited resources (Handy, 2017). Moreover, achievement rates remain pitifully low indicating high failure rates on national exams. While national exams are a poor measure of student achievement, passing these exams impact the economic and social mobility of the entire community, determining its ability to sustain itself.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual frame of this study is predicated on critical theories that are grounded in their ontological and epistemological commitments to equity and inclusion in war-affected schools (see Figure 1). Theories that inform this conceptual framework specifically aim to examine ways in which teachers and teaching practice in war affected settings are understood

(Miller, Kulkarni & Kushner, 2006). Critical inclusive education, and critical special education center equity in the ways in which inclusion is understood and practiced (Artiles, Kozleski & Waitoller, 2011; Naraian, 2017; Oyler, 2011, Slee, 2009; Skrtic, 1991). Critical inclusive and special education highlight the problematic ways in which inclusion is taken up without centering equity as an organizing construct. This leads to further marginalization of multiply-marginalized students within veneers of advancing inclusion. This study recognizes this important nuance, thus does not collapse equity and inclusion into one category. Holding equity and inclusion in this parallel, uncomfortable balance illuminates the ways in which they function in mutually inclusive and exclusive ways within war-affected schools.

What counts as equitable and inclusive is conceptualized based on critical decolonial feminist perspectives (Collins, 1986; Sandoval, 2001) and disability critical race theory/ DisCrit* (Annamma, Conner & Ferri, 2013). Equity and inclusivity are processes that (a) redistribute educational resources in advancing access, opportunity to learn and participation*;* (b) recognize and appreciate individual and collective differences in learning and teaching*;* (c) represent the decisions of marginalized groups in determining the agenda for transformative praxis (Kozleski, Artiles & Waitoller, 2013). DisCrit further theorizes the ways in which inequitable and exclusionary teaching practices are functions of an intricate relationship between ableism and other constructions of race, gender, class and sexuality that are invisibly couched within assumptions of what counts as ability and disability. DisCrit provides ways in which to understand colonizing, dehumanizing discourses that prevail in centers of power that determine what counts as disability, who is counted as disabled and what these determinations mean for those who navigate these spaces (Annamma, Cornner & Ferri, 2013; Naraian, 2013). DisCrit pays attention to ways in which disability is constructed in teaching activities in ways that

perpetuate, maintain, and legitimize inequity and exclusion.

Factors that mediate the ways in which teachers understand themselves (i.e., their roles, responsibilities, subjectivities) and their teaching activities, determine they ways in which inequitable and exclusionary teaching activities are perpetuated, maintained, and legitimized. Furthermore, the ways in which to identify these processes and transform praxis in service of equity and inclusion capture the agentic capacity of the teacher's engaging in these activities (Naraian, 2013; Sannino, Engeström & Lemos, 2016). These concepts are theorized primarily using decolonizing feminist theories and third generation cultural historical activity theory. These theories not only offer an in-depth understanding of teachers and their teaching activities, but also highlight reflexive, transformative ways in which teachers disrupt inequitable and exclusionary teaching activities through transformative praxis. These theories also provide ontological and epistemological foundations that guide and justify the methodologies described in chapter 3.

Critical decolonizing feminist theories incorporates constructs from post-colonial, black and third world feminist theories. They (a) center marginalized teacher voices in service of advancing equity and inclusion*;* (b) recognize intersectionality and the ways in which it shapes how teachers understand themselves and the ways in which they engage in teaching activities*;* (c) rejects the deficit positioning of teachers (and students) in war-affected settings, and instead positions them as knowledge generators capable of engaging in critical reflexivity (Collins, 2014; Greene, 1978; Lewis & Mills, 2003). Third generation cultural historical activity theory locates activity spaces illuminating the intricate ways in which teaching activities are culturally mediated. Cultural mediation positions teaching activities as being mediated by historical, social and cultural factors (Cole, 1998). In foregrounding activity, the framework conceptually locates

the dynamic interpersonal and contextual conditions that shape learning and teaching within schools (Engeström, 1999). They illuminate the ways in which contradictions, and disjunctures emerge in activity systems. Disjunctures capture the ways in which institutional and social-cultural, historical factors structure and shape contradictions and tensions, that have the potential to thwart or advance equity and inclusion (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007; Smith,2006).

Critical Decolonizing Feminist Theories War-affected schools are rife with influences from their colonial past. They are also influenced by neo-colonial modernity that determines the ways in which learning, and teaching is conceptualized (Dei & Lordan, 2016; Lugones, 2010; Mignolo, 2007). By prioritizing decolonizing educational praxis, this study draws from critical decolonial feminist theories to address the power disparities caused by Western-centric hegemonic ideologies. Critical decolonial feminist theories are typically used to foreground gender-based oppressions. However, in this study these theories provide necessary theoretical tools to examine teaching activities by paying close attention to the subjective and structural realities (i.e., race, ethnicity, caste, gender, poverty, dis/ability) that shape learning and teaching (Lewis & Mills, 2003). These tools have a long history of interrogating processes of inequity and exclusion and marginalization, and therefore are well suited for examining inequitable and exclusionary practices shaped by both domestic and transnational processes (Davies, 2011b; Lewis & Mills, 2003; Patil, 2013).

Critical decolonial feminist theories center marginalized voices by paying attention to how roles, responsibilities and intersectional subjectivities are formed, maintained, and resisted in colonized spaces (Anzaldúa, 1987; Collins, 2014; Mohanty, 2003; Spivak, 1988). The co-subjectivities highlight how multiple subjective consciousness, identities and structures interact in ways that both marginalize and privilege students and teachers (Patil, 2013; Yuval-Davis,

2006). Co-constructing subjectivities resists homogenizing teachers and students, rather it recognizes how identities and structures mediate the ways individuals and communities participate in activity systems (Mohanty, 2003). Co-construction recognizes how subjectivities are formed in and through multiple intersecting identities and structures that privilege and oppress individuals and their communities (Crenshaw, 1991; Lorde, 2012; Yuval-Davis, 2006). For example, teachers' subjectivities are shaped by how teachers are socialized into the practice of teaching (Dei & Lordan, 2016; Kozleski & Handy, 2017) and how they navigate the professional bureaucracies that organize their teaching activities (Skrtic, 1995, 2013). Colonial projects are invested in ordering human beings hierarchically setting some groups as superior and others as deficient (Lugones, 2010).

In positioning teachers and their activities through critical decolonizing feminist theories, this study resists locating deficiencies within teachers (and their students). Resisting homogenizing discourses, disrupts the problematic ways in which teachers are positioned a-priori (Mohanty, 2003). For example, teachers in war-affected settings are rarely viewed as competent. They are often positioned as deficient through pathologizing discourses (i.e., traumatized), are deemed lazy, truant, unmotivated and corrupt. This positioning locates deficiencies in teachers while ignoring contextual realities that shape their activities (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007). Critical decolonizing feminist theories subvert these problematic a-priori assumptions by allowing teachers to determine the ways in which their subjectivities and activities are represented (Mohanty, 2003, Spivak, 1988). These lenses position teachers as knowledge generators highlighting the ingenious ways in which teachers in war-affected settings resist and regress boundaries of marginalization, while constructively critiquing their activities that may perpetuate, maintain, and legitimize inequity and exclusion (Greene, 1987; Gutiérrez & Rogoff,

2013; hooks, 2014).

Critical decolonial feminist theories are specifically equipped to reveal ways in which hegemony can be resisted and even by less powerful groups. They recognize teacher agency in navigating multiple institutional and social oppressions (Lopez Cardozo & Hoeks, 2015). They reveal possible ways in which inequitable and exclusionary practices can be disrupted by recognizing their own social locations within institutions and structures (Collins, 2014; Spivak, 1988). In doing so, these theories resist essentialist dichotomies that misrepresents teachers and their activities in war-affective as solely oppressive or emancipatory (Freire, 1983; Sandoval, 2001; Spivak, 1988). Teachers are given opportunities to resist dichotomies and embrace nuances in making explicit the ways they navigate their teaching activities.

Third Generation Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) This theory spotlights potential activities that perpetuate, maintain. and justify exclusionary, inequitable practices that hinder access, participation, opportunity and achievement of marginalized youth (Fraser, 2008; Kozleski & Waitoller, 2010). CHAT situates inequitable and exclusionary teaching activities as the unit of analysis (Engeström, 1999. This unit of analysis highlights the ways in which all activities are mediated by complex social, cultural and historical factors (Cole, 1998; Engeström, 1999; Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Leont'ev, 1978; Vygotsky, 1987). They illuminate how teaching activities are shaped by situated social and structural processes, assumptions, beliefs, values and subjective histories percolating within and between activity systems (Cole, 1998; Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Cultural mediation reveals how teachers and students are *collectively* engaged in activities within an activity system. Here, multiple factors simultaneously and iteratively influence teaching and learning (Cole, 1998; Engeström, 2015; Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Roth & Tobin, 2002).

Culturally mediated teaching activities are not linear process-product activities. They reject simple cause and effect linear explanations favored by neo-colonial modernity that situates activities as standard, atomic, homogenous, separable acts (Lugones, 2010). Cultural mediation rejects creating a-priori assumptions about activity systems. Instead it recognizes the ongoing confluence of factors that shape activities.

Finally, CHAT recognizes tensions and contradictions as a necessary component of advancing change within and between activity systems (Engeström, 2001). CHAT does not position these tensions as problems to be "fixed", rather as opportunities for transformation through critical praxis (Freire, 1993; Lorde, 2012; Sandoval, 2001). Therefore, transformational praxis is not reduced to a set of imposed interventions or strategies rather it is situated in providing teachers tools that advance critical skills and knowledge to navigate these shifting activity systems (Greene, 1987; Weber, 2007).

Tensions are appreciated for their potential in advancing equity and inclusion by creating third spaces that transgress norms and create expansive learning opportunities (Engeström, 2015; Gutiérrez, 2008; Sannino, Daniels & Gutiérrez, 2009). Contradictions and tensions in activity systems are further theorized using the concept of critical junctures which are viewed as 'brief phases of institutional flux…during which more dramatic change is possible' (Cappoccia & Kelemen, 2007, p. 341). Embracing disjunctures resists colonial modernity's imposition that favors stability and standardization of teaching activities, and instead views contradictions as opportunities to create meaningful change through critical reflection and problem-solving practices that center equity and inclusivity (Kozleski, Artiles & Skrtic, 2014; Skrtic, 2005).

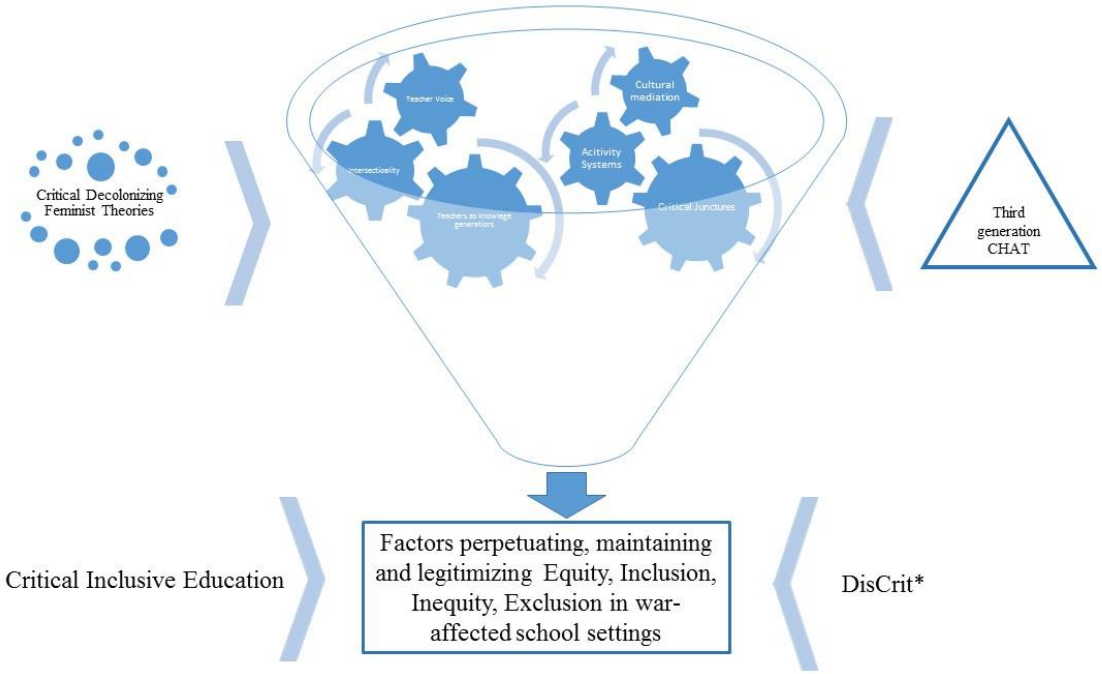

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Conclusion

Gaining a deep understanding of teaching activities in war-affected settings in service of advancing equity and inclusivity is of vital importance. Despite the troubling relationship between education and war, education is still viewed as a vital lever in mitigating future conflict (Buckland, 2005). Teachers and their teaching activities shape learning experiences of youth who are marginalized, thus examining teaching activities serves the purpose of ensuring equitable learning for marginalized youth and perhaps most importantly reveals ways in which to support teachers (Vega & Bajaj, 2016). This study was conceptualized using multiple theories that highlight the complexities of teaching in war affected settings and utilized multiple methodological tools in studying the ways in which to transform exclusionary and inequitable teaching practices.

Chapter 2: A Look at Extant Research on War-Affected Schooling

This dissertation study examined the factors that mediated how teachers understood themselves and their teaching activities in a war-affected school. This study paid attention to the ways in which equity and inclusivity were centered or de(center)ed in their teaching activities. The study revealed inequitable and exclusionary processes that marginalized youth who navigated multiple personal, familial, social, and political intersections. This chapter is a synthesis of existing research on war-affected school settings that identified factors that mediated teacher experiences. A detailed synthesis of the research reveals what is known and unknown about teachers and their teaching practices in war-affected schools. As well, research methodologies chronicle the limitations of research methods used in war-affected contexts. Five specific questions guided the review of the extant literature: (a) what are the purposes for which the studies were conducted?; (b) which particular teacher perspectives were studied? (c) what epistemological foundations framed the studies?*;* (d) what methodologies were used to pursue lines of inquiry?

Four sections structure this chapter: (a) the methods that were employed in conducting this review*;* (b) the search strategies and challenges faced during this process*;* (c) the decisions that resulted in articles that were included and excluded from this review*;* (d) the main themes that emerged. The central arguments, claims, revelations, and limitations pertaining to each theme are substantiated by drawing on examples from the studies reviewed. I use the conceptual framework described in chapter 1 to frame the themes in this literature review.

Methods

The following section describes the processes I used to select the 33 articles reviewed in this chapter. They were culled from the several thousand that exist on war-affected schools.

Using a title and abstract search, about 300 articles were identified. Of these, 96 were picked for further review by carefully reading the abstracts. Inclusive criteria applied to 96 articles yielded the 33 articles that were analyzed in this chapter. The strategies used in searching for articles, the inclusion criteria and methods used in analyzing these articles are described in detail.

Search Strategies Multiple search strategies were employed to identify relevant articles. First, a basic search was conducted on Google Scholar to identify the search terms and key words that indexed the articles that could be reviewed. Once initial key terms were identified (i.e., conflict-affected, teachers), a list of synonyms and variations for each of the search terms was compiled (i.e., war-affected, educators). This compilation mainly comprised words used in research articles, while words from a thesaurus search was also included. Using this list, each search term was included in a Google search to identify the most potent terms for the search process. For example, while the search term conflict-affected was a useful way to identify potential articles through title searches, its variation, armed-conflict, (or synonym, fragile states), did not increase the number of potential articles considered. Once the most effective search terms were identified, I conducted general site searches (e.g., Google scholar, EBSCO, and ERIC) using these search phrases. The same search terms were used to scan KU Quick Search, ProQuest, and Academic Search Complete.

The selected terms were searched in multiple ways. For instance, the order of terms were switched as well as phrasing (i.e., “war-affected teachers”), truncating (Teach*), and using the Boolean operators (i.e., AND, OR). I searched for these terms by title and whole text. Each article that appeared was briefly skimmed to identify the most useful articles. Over 300 potential articles were skimmed by title and abstract, and about 70 initial articles were selected for further review. Once the 70 initial articles were selected for further review, they were used to conduct

further searches gradually increasing the total number of articles selected for further review to 96.

By identifying the journals where most of these articles were published, I conducted journal specific searches. The 70 articles selected for further review in this study were published mostly in *Teaching and Teacher Education, International Review of Education, Journal of International and Comparative Education, Comparative Education Review, International Journal of Education Research, International Journal of Education Research and Development and the Journal of Peace Education*. These journals were searched for additional articles. As a result, 11 more articles were included for further review. An ancestral hand search was also conducted by utilizing the bibliographies of the articles. For example, the cumulative risk study conducted by Wolf et al., (2015), specifically examined teachers in war-affected settings. The bibliography of this article pointed to other similar research (i.e., Gujarado, 2011) and reports (i.e., Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007). The hand search resulted in adding nine more articles to be reviewed further. In examining the articles selected for further review, I compiled a list of author names whose work seemed to be most relevant in terms of answering the questions that framed this review. By examining the list, 12 authors whose names appeared three times or more were selected to conduct author specific searches. For example, Jackie Kirk's name appeared over five times and Zvi Bekerman, and Michalinos Zembylas names appeared over nine times. The search by author yielded an additional six articles.

Eight books pertaining to education and conflict were hand searched for potential articles. For example, by reviewing the chapters in the book *Educating Children in Conflict Zones* (2011), two additional articles were identified. In total, six articles from all eight books, and their bibliographies were identified and included for further review. A country specific search was

conducted as a final check in ensuring the search process was both expansive and thorough. Three countries (i.e. South Sudan, Colombia, Philippines) were selected based on their similarity to Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka, Colombia and the Philippines are categorized as "High warning" in the Fragile States Index of 2016. This index, published by the United States think tank, Fund for Peace, groups countries according to their fragility based on social, economic, and political indicators (i.e., ethnic violence, unemployment, internal conflict). South Sudan was selected based on my familiarity with the ethnic conflict in the region. The country specific searches yielded four articles that were included for further review.

The search was concluded when it was evident that all search sources and ways of searching for literature was sufficiently exhausted. Toward the end of the search, a saturation point occurred where articles that I had already identified for further review started reappearing. At this point the search was suspended. A total of 96 articles were included for further review. Although the search strategies described above may appear linear, this process was iterative. One type of search often converged with another type of search or diverged in ways that opened other possibilities of searching for literature. For instance, by conducting the search by author name, new sources such as books and reports appeared. In following these leads and browsing reports, I identified other key articles. I discussed my search processes with my dissertation chair who conducted similar searches to ensure that all search paths have been sufficiently exhausted. The 96 articles considered for further review were tabulated by citation and abstract.

Inclusion Criteria The 33 articles out of the 96 met the following criteria (a) published between the years 2004 to 2017*;*(b) empirical studies published in peer reviewed journals*;* (c) teachers participated in the study. I applied these criteria to the abstracts of the 96 articles selected for further review. When abstracts were not available I skimmed the articles to determine if they fulfilled the inclusion criteria. By evaluating these 96 articles based on the inclusive criteria, 33 articles were included in this literature review. The criteria ensured that the articles I selected for this review were empirical, and peer- reviewed studies in which teachers were primary or secondary research participants. The inclusive criteria did not place limitation on the type of school (i.e. primary, elementary, middle, and high school), research methods, or the geographic region of the study. These 33 articles were tabulated in an Excel document by (a) search type and date (i.e. Ancestral search)*;* (b) APA citation*;* (c) abstract (when available)*;* (d) method*;* (e) type of journal.

Description of the Analytic Process Once the 33 articles were selected, I read and coded each article using Nvivo a qualitative software program. I created a coding tree that outlined the purpose of the study, methods, research questions, analysis, and findings. Overtime, these codes were iteratively developed into themes (i.e., trends in findings). These themes captured the salient patterns and trends in each article. Larger themes included sub themes that illuminated important distinctions within each theme. For instance, the methodology theme included sub themes such as sampling, instrumentation, and analysis. In evaluating each theme, I wrote detailed analytic memos. Once I coded all 33 articles, I carefully read each theme reviewing and reorganizing to illuminate the patterns and trends that emerged.

Patterns and Trends in Studies of War-Affected Schooling

The themes that emerged from reviewing the 33 articles illuminated the following trends:

(a) purpose of the studies*;* (b) conceptual frameworks and theoretical underpinnings*;* and (c) methodologies. Trends pertaining to the purpose of studies were categorized into two broad themes. The first included ten studies that focused specifically on evaluating interventions and initiatives. The second included evidence from all 33 studies and described how teacher perspectives were studied and evaluated. The entire set of studies are then critiqued in relation to the conceptual framework that informs this dissertation study. A final section looks at patterns and trends in methodologies.

What Intervention and Initiative Studies in War-Affected Schools Offer and Omit

Ten studies in this review were conducted to determine the effectiveness and or impact of interventions or initiatives introduced in war-affected school settings. The contributions made by intervention and evaluation studies to the corpus of research in relation to war-affected schools are valuable. They offer important feedback to those who initiate interventions (i.e., international aid agencies, national and local governments), and create important pathways to conduct research in extremely volatile contexts. However, none of the interventions and initiatives promoted interventions or initiatives that centered equity and inclusion. Studies evaluating interventions and initiatives did not account for the underlying needs of an educational system that must adapt to the redistribution of power and resources. None of the initiatives claimed to mitigate the ways in which inequitable, exclusionary practices are perpetuated, maintained, and legitimized in war affected school settings. This limitation is significant, considering the prevalence of inequities and exclusions in war-affected school settings (Buckland, 2005; King, 2008).

Missing in Action: Equity and Inclusion in Interventions and Initiatives. These studies prioritized evaluating the impact, relevance, and sustainability of interventions and initiatives introduced in mitigating particular concerns associated with war related contingencies. For example, multicultural initiatives in Palestinian-Jewish integrated schools (Bekerman, 2004) and curriculum-based interventions (Kilpatrick & Leitch, 2004) targeted specific objectives such as promoting peace and social cohesion. Similarly, initiatives such as the Healing Classrooms Initiative, which is a part of the International Rescue Committee's educational strategy focused on supporting teachers to maintain healing spaces in classrooms, targeted student psychosocial well-being (Winthorp & Kirk, 2008). All these programs were promoted as important (by teachers and humanitarian aid organizations) for students' emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Examples of these interventions and initiatives include civics education (Akar, 2012), peace education (Zembylas, Charalambous & Charalambous, 2012), and curriculum reform (Capelo & Cabrita, 2015). Often these initiatives and interventions were funded and managed by government and non-government agencies (i.e., International Rescue Committee).

While these studies centered student needs, they prioritized psychosocial wellbeing at the interpersonal and intrapersonal level. It was clear that inequities and exclusions were rampant in these schools, yet the interventions were limited to tinkering instructional practices, or curricula. None of them explicitly centered equity and inclusion, although many studies had the potential to center equity and inclusion. For example, Akar (2006) examined the challenges of citizenship education in Lebanon. He found that teachers struggled with the curriculum primarily because of their limited skills in utilizing effective pedagogy. Omitted were the ways in which these limited skills in pedagogy may have unequally distributed educational access to some students over others, or how the curriculum itself may have been a way of excluding certain points of views in

the school community were not examined. Similarly, in their study on education for mutual understanding, Kilpatrick and Leitch (2004) students participated in cross-community activities such as quizzes, games, debates, drama, role-plays and trips. While the researchers studied the degree to which the activities helped students gain better understanding of one another, the researchers omitted studying how student-teacher interactions and regular academic responsibilities changed in relation to improving their access to educational opportunities. Instead, teachers shared their evaluations based on challenges and successes in implementing this initiative, paying little attention how their subjectivities and attitudes about equity and inclusion shifted during this process.

Most intervention and initiatives were predicated on needs assessment studies that were conducted in war-affected contexts (Al-Obadi et al 2013). Once needs were assessed a framework for meeting these needs were constructed, implemented, and evaluated (Winthorp & Kirk, 2008). The studies primarily focused on building teacher capacities geared toward addressing student issues related to war trauma, promoting peace, citizenship, and human rights education (Wolf, Torrente, Frisoli et al 2015; Zembylas, Charalambous & Charalambous, 2012). The interventions and initiatives varied in duration and were evaluated using quasi experimental or qualitative methods. Evaluations were conducted intermittently or at the completion of the interventions and initiatives. Teachers provided feedback to evaluators, usually university faculty or doctoral students, on the affordances and constraints of the interventions and initiatives that they implemented. Evaluators used qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. Research questions that framed these studies were evaluative in nature. For example, in determining the implementation fidelity of IRC's healing classroom initiative Kirk and Winthorp (2008) asked teachers "What sort of professional/moral support/help do you get from CEC (community

education committee)?[2] (p.887). Zembylas et al., (2011) examined the emotional impact of the Greek-Cypriot policy initiative for peaceful co-existence by asking teachers "what feelings does the prospect of reconciliation between Greeks Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots bring out in you?" (p. 337). Similarly, Wolf et al., (2015) specifically asked, "does the LRHC (learning to read in healing classrooms) intervention impact teacher burnout, motivation, and job satisfaction after one year of partial implementation?" (p. 28). Evaluators analyzed these teacher responses and compiled reports that detailed the impact of interventions and initiatives. They also provided recommendations in terms of improving future interventions and initiatives. These research studies play dual roles that are useful. On the one hand, they provided much needed data on school demographics and the factors that mediate school cultures. On the other hand, because interventions and initiates necessitated training teachers, they provided opportunities for teachers to build their capacities to teach in war-affected settings.

However, researchers did not seem to interrogate possible shifts in teacher and student subjectivities as a result of participating in these initiatives. Van Ommering's (2011) study proposed that the impact of conflict on education systems must consider the lived experiences of teachers and students. These lived experiences were evaluated in relation to civics education initiatives that promoted social cohesion. Yet, based on his findings he recommends "it is essential to equip teachers with child oriented, politically neutral skills to guide discussions on sensitive issues rather than confront them with the task of who is right and wrong" (p.553).

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[2] CEC's are important mechanisms set up by NGO's to build community partnerships in places like Afghanistan. Many initiatives sponsored by NGO's like the healing classroom initiative by the IRC use this mechanism as away implementing and managing their activities.

Assuming neutrality in an initiative that aims to promote social cohesion may result in silencing the atrocities experienced by some ethnic groups, significantly compromising social cohesion by excluding marginal, dissenting points of view. Certainly, it is impossible for intervention and initiative studies to capture all the complexities of learning and teaching within schools. Nonetheless, considering the frequency with which war specific initiatives and interventions are implemented in war-affected school settings, it is important to understand how they advance or thwart equity and inclusion.

The Steady Seepage of Hegemonic Knowledge Decolonizing knowledge privileges marginalized teacher voices. It focuses on the co-construction of knowledges, recognizes intersectionality, and rejects deficit positioning of teachers and students (Lugones, 2010; Smith, 2012). In the studies reviewed for this chapter, teachers participated as recipients of professional development, as implementers of interventions and initiatives, and as feedback providers to evaluators. By assigning these roles to teachers, research circumscribed understanding the ways in which interventions and initiatives shaped teacher subjectivities. As implementers of outsiders' perspectives on what was needed, they received training and support to carry out these initiatives and interventions. The subject positions teachers had to assume were based on being implementors of initiatives, not decision makers. As such, power disparities between knowledge systems that were valued and relatively devalued (i.e., teachers, researchers) remained intact. Interestingly, students were rarely interviewed in a pre/post design study. Even when students were interviewed (Kirk & Winthorp, 2008), there was no triangulation of data to demonstrate the connection between fidelity of implementation, teacher perception of impact, and changes in student behavior, academic performance, absenteeism, or perception of change.

While research conducted in war-affected settings is critiqued for valorizing adult (i.e.,

teachers, administrators, policy makers) over students' points of view (Winthrop & Kirk, 2008), a closer look at intervention and evaluation studies reveals how, even when teacher viewpoints are prioritized, they are constrained by the objectives of the interventions and initiatives. This limitation provides an incomplete view of learning and teaching in war-affected settings. For example, Vega & Bajaj (2016) examined teacher experiences and challenges in relation to an education program implemented called Cír-culos de Aprendizaje (CA)/learning circles that aimed to guarantee the right to education for marginalized populations. Teacher perspectives were evaluated based on the challenges in implementing this initiative. In analyzing teacher perspectives, they found that teachers lacked necessary pedagogical skills that negatively impacted the outcomes of the initiative. However, other challenges teachers faced outside the purpose of this study were not evaluated, possibly obscuring important relationships that complicate complex issues such as the right to education. Unfortunately, the findings led to positioning teachers as deficient without allowing teachers adequate opportunities to provide a more holistic view of factors that mediate their teaching experiences such as teachers own social locations and the multiple intersections they navigate. In fact, this study did not report any demographic data on the teacher sample except mentioning that "teachers generally came from the same regions in which they taught" (p.363).

Evaluation studies also circumscribe the ways in which teachers participated in research activities. It limited their ability to challenge hegemonic discourses that often frame interventions and initiatives. In the 10 studies that specifically examined initiatives and interventions only two studies (based on one initiative) suggested that teachers were involved in identifying needs prior to the implementing the intervention or initiative (Kirk & Winthrop, 2008; Winthorp & Kirk, 2008). Even when teacher perspectives were solicited in terms of identifying needs, there was no

evidence suggesting that opportunities were created for teachers to initiate bottom-up interventions based on their own funds of knowledge (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Even when teachers were involved in identifying needs, the interventions, and initiatives to address these needs are set up by outside experts. Most of these interventions and initiatives were predicated on prior research or on initiatives and interventions used in other war affected settings. An analysis of the 10 evaluation studies showed that education experts in conflict contexts imposed their assumptions about social cohesion and psychosocial care on local contexts. For example, the healing classroom initiative was based on internal evaluations conducted on IRC's educational work in over 25 countries affected by conflict (Kirk & Winthorp, 2008). Similarly, the integrative bilingual multicultural educational initiative in Israel was implemented based on the assumption that bilingual education advances multicultural goals (Bekerman, 2004). These examples reveal the ways in which top-down initiatives shape the ways in which teachers participate in these studies.

When teachers transgress or resist the initiative or intervention, evaluators describe these activities as a function of teacher deficits. In all 10 articles, when the goals of the initiative were not adequately met, researchers pointed out deficits in teachers' pedagogical skills (Akar, 2006), emotional status (Zembylas et al., 2011), and teachers' poor conceptualization of content (Yemini & Yardeni, 2014). This critique does not suggest that teachers do not display these realities, rather I argue that the ways in which top-down interventions are evaluated often results in positioning teachers as deficient without recognizing the possibility that they might be exercising agency and resistance to unresponsive initiatives.

Interventions and Initiatives Mediate Cultural Practice in Classrooms Interventions and initiatives Impact more than what is Studied in any given study.They shape overall practices in a classroom. However, intervention and evaluation studies are set up narrowly to evaluate the impact a mediating factor (i.e., curriculum) on one or two particular outcomes (i.e., prejudice reduction). These narrow conceptualizations are directed by a specific set of rules on how activities in classrooms should be conducted and for what purpose. They shape what is prioritized in the curriculum (Akar, 2016), how teachers engage pedagogically (Bekerman & Zymbylas, 2010), and the ways in which learning and teaching activities in classrooms are set up (Winthorp & Kirk, 2008). Often, the initiatives and interventions focused exclusively on a single intervention (i.e., psycho-social intervention or prejudice reduction), its delivery and its subsequent results. There is very little evidence that researchers questioned the ways in which these interventions and initiatives shape classroom cultures and teaching practices outside the interventions purposes. For example, Kilpatrick & Leitch (2004) examined the impact of curricular-based interventions designed to reduce students' prejudice reduction. This singular focus on prejudice reduction evaluated as the only outcome of the intervention fails to recognize how curricular interventions shape consequences that go beyond prejudice reduction. This study did not examine how this curricula intervention may have altered instructional activities or student, teacher interactions.

Focusing on specific outcomes as prescribed by the intervention or initiative disregards the complex ways in which activity systems are altered in other ways because of interventions and initiatives. They ignore the reality that despite strict prescriptions delineated within interventions, learning and teaching activities are culturally mediated by factors that reside outside the contours of the initiative. For example, Kirk and Winthrop (2004) evaluated the

impact of the International Rescue Committee's (IRC) healing classroom initiative on home-based schools in Afghanistan. IRC conducted teacher training workshops and classroom visits to encourage teachers to improve student participation by using teaching strategies that incorporated child-centered learning. They found that despite promoting student participation, teachers implemented these strategies by adopting them into familiar pedagogical repertories. As a result, student participation was limited to rote learning and recitation. Regardless of the mandate set by the healing classroom initiatives, teaching repertoires were culturally mediated by religious learning and teaching practices popular in Koranic schooling. This example reveals how complex activities such as student participation cannot be mediated by the set of rules and practices advanced by an initiative. Student participation is a culturally mediated activity shaped by socio-cultural factors, as such initiatives and interventions must account for this reality.

Examining Teacher Perspectives

In addition to the studies that evaluated interventions and initiatives, a second trend emerged where researcher's actively solicited teacher perspectives. Overall, studies examining teacher perspectives offered important insights related to the ways in which social, cultural, political, historical, and psychological aspects influenced their teaching activities. Table 1 sorts these studies into two major categories organized by teacher perspectives pertaining to the socio-political context and the psycho-social context of war-affected schools. Eleven studies focused on tenuous political fractures that mediated their teaching experiences. Another nine focused on teacher responsibilities in promoting values and practices that center peace, reconciliation, citizenship, human rights, integration, and social cohesion. In 18 of the 33 studies reviewed, teachers offered their perspectives on their roles and responsibilities in promoting the well-being of their students. Eleven studies paid attention to teachers lived experiences in relation to their

own wellbeing.

Table 1

Teacher Perspectives by Topic Area

Topic Area	Specific Teacher Perspectives	Articles
The Socio-Political context and its impact on teachers and their teaching activities	Navigating tenuous and controversial politics/political ideologies and identities in war-affected settings. Challenges in teaching controversial content and engaging with students on controversial subjects	Akar 2012; Bekermen & Zembylas, 2010; Breidlid, 2010; Kilpatrick & Leitch, 2004; Nasser & Wong, 2012; Niens, O'Conner & Smith,2013; Vega & Bajaj,2016; Van Ommering,2011; Yair & Alayan, 2009; Zembylas & Bekerman, 2008; Zembylas, Charalambous & Charalambous, 2012.
	Teacher responsibilities in promoting peace building, reconciliation, citizenship education, human rights, social cohesion and integration. Challenges in implementing policy initiatives that impact curriculum	Akar, 2006; Cardozo & Hoeks, 2015; Duncan & Cardozo, 2017; Hromadzic, 2008; Niens, O'Conner & Smith 2013; Van Ommering, 2017; Weinstein, Freedman & Hughson,2007; Zeymbylas, Charalambous & Lesta, 2016
Psychosocial context and its impact on teachers and their teaching practices	Teacher responsibilities in ensuring mental, psychological, and social well-being of students. Addressing student behavioral and academic difficulties	Akar, 2012; Al-Obaidi et al 2012; Panter-Brick 2009; Tol et al 2010; Willis & Nagel, 2014; Winthrop & Kirk, 2008
	Teacher roles in evaluating the impact of war on students and the responsibilities of addressing the impact of war trauma and stress in students	Akar, 2012; Al-Obaidi et al 2012; Bekerman, 2004; Capelo & Cabrita, 2015; Cardozo & Hoeks, 2015; Kilpatrick & Leitch, 2004; Thomas et al, 2016; Van Ommering, 2011; Van Ommering, 2017; Willis & Nagel, 2014; Winthorp & Kirk, 2008; Weinstein, Freedman & Hughson, 2007; Yemini & Yardeni, 2014; Zembylas, Charalambous & Lesta, 2016; Zembylas, Charalambous, Charalambous & Kendeou, 2011
	Historical Narratives, cultural heritage that shape teacher well-being	Bekerman, 2004; Bekerman & Zembylas, 2010; Zembylas, Charalambous, Charalambous &

Topic Area	Specific Teacher Perspectives	Articles
		Kendeou, 2011
	Teacher competencies and self-perceptions based on expertise, preparation, experience, and professional development	Akar, 2012;Kirk & Winthorp, 2008; Wolf, et al 2015
	Teacher well-being based on living and working conditions	Al-Obaidi et al 2012; Vega & Bajaj,2016; Wolf, et al, 2015; Wolf et al 2015; Zembylas, Charalambous, Charalambous & Kendeou, 2011

The Impact of the Socio-Political Context on Teachers and their Activities Schools in war-affected settings are situated in socio-political contexts that are fraught with deeply entrenched divisive socio-political structures and identities. Teachers working in these contexts navigate tenuous socio-political fault lines both visible and invisible. Researchers used direct and indirect questions in soliciting teacher perspectives on how the socio-political context impacted their teaching. For example, Akar (2012) used semi-structured interviews that openly asked teachers about their views on citizenship and citizenship education in Lebanon. Similarly, Breidlid (2010) examined educational discourses with regards to military struggle between Sudan's People's Liberation Army in the south and the Khartoum government in the North, revealing the complex and problematic, uncritical allegiances teachers held with both entities. These studies revealed the challenges teachers faced in negotiating socio-political dilemmas in educational spaces. Studies described the ways in which War-affected schools spaces can become easily inflamed by socio-political divisions and allegiances among faculty, students, and administrative authorities. In mitigating these possible eruptions, teachers prudently exercised caution in the ways they engage in teaching activities. Kilpatrick & Leitch (2004) described the

ways in which teachers avoided controversial subjects in the classroom. They avoided conversations about ethnic differences, past grievances, and current political arrangements. Teachers also described the challenges they faced in teaching controversial curricula that was deemed antagonistic and conflicting. Zembylas, Charlambous and Charalambous (2012) examined Greek-Cypriot teachers' discomforts in teaching a peace education curriculum. One of the teachers (Thalia) said:

> That is how the questions started. The emotional tension in the atmosphere and the most important thing for me was that I had a hard time responding to them. And we ended up going into a totally different direction from what I planned to do. (p.1079).

Thalia's response highlights how socio-political factors fractures, together with curriculum shapes her teaching activities in problematic and indeterminate ways. Despite these politically volatile realties, teachers are required to promote reconciliation, peace and social cohesion through their teaching activities. Teachers struggled to promote these venerable ideals in their politically charged pedagogical spaces. Breidlid (2010) found pervasive Islamization and Arabization in classrooms that effectively marginalized other religious and ethnic affiliations. In this context teachers struggled to promote reconciliation. A teacher from Khatoum noted "The National Curriculum is planned by few people. It is not designed according to the whole area. It is designed . . . just for Muslims, not Christians". Another teacher agreed by noting ""This is wrong! We cannot teach our culture until we go back… [The northern authorities] see the South as a block, a stumbling block, hindering Islamisation to the rest of Africa". (p.564). These views point out the ways in which teachers struggle with the responsibilities placed on them in relation to promoting ideals of peace and social cohesion amidst volatile political conditions.

Studies eliciting teacher's perspectives revealed the ways in which teachers own social-political

locations and political views influenced their teaching activities. Van Ommering (2011) examined teachers' understanding of education and conflict. Teachers responded by positioning themselves according to their social locations. A teacher in his study said, "every now and then a student comes to me to ask, "am I a Sunni or Shi'a?" or "What is my sect?" Then I reply "you don't have to know. You are Lebanese" or "You have to love each other as human beings, not as members of a particular sect: (p. 550). Similarly, Hromadzic (2008) studied teacher views on integrated schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where a teacher in her study described his view on using a mixed language stating " You and I are now talking *mjesanac* (mixed language) so that we can understand each other…but this is an artificial language, neither Serb nor Croat..these kids would be illiterate because they wouldn't speak any language…whoever speaks *mjesanac* is illiterate" (p.557). Both examples, show important ways in which teachers' socio-political locations views mediated their teaching activities.

Finally, socio-political tensions also impacted the ways in which teacher engaged with one another. Teachers reported challenges in working with colleagues and students who belong to different (often waring) ethnic, religious backgrounds (Bekerman, 2004; Hromadzic, 2008; Van Ommering, 2017; Weinstein, Freedman & Hughson, 2007). Bekarman and Zymbylas (2010) examined the interactions between Palestinian and Jewish teachers in integrated schools in Israel. They reported how teachers often held on to the historical narratives of their own community that made interactions between them superficial and tense. For example, a Jewish teacher described her difficulties in working with Palestinian counterparts stating ''I want to add that sometimes part of my difficulty is the feeling of having to (or being expected to) apologize – as if I have to justify myself. That's something I don't feel from the other side [i.e. the Palestinians do not see themselves needing to apologize]'' (p.510). Differing socio-political

locations among the impacted their interactions with each other, challenging the ways in which teachers understood themselves in these politically volatile spaces.

Equity and inclusion in schools are political endeavors undertaken in schools which are political institutions (Slee, 2011). Even when studies in this review solicited teacher perspectives of political issues such as peace, reconciliation and social-cohesion, these political constructs did not seem to incorporate conversations about equity and inclusion. Indeed, this absence is notable considering research documenting the ways in which inequities and exclusions in schools, mirror political inequities and exclusions in the larger context (Miller-Vaux, 2007). For example, Van Ommering (2017) noted that it is important to understand teacher's roles in peace building by advancing good governance, teacher rights and conflict resolution. However, none of these suggestions recognized that concepts such as good governance are predicated upon equity and inclusion (Grindle, 2007).

This abstraction of equity and inclusion from other political values such as social-cohesion, failed to recognize the ways in which teachers' socio-political views in promoting peace may have shaped their teaching activities in relation to promoting equity and inclusion. For example, Niens, Connor and Smith (2013) investigated citizenship education in Northern Ireland. They found that multiple forms of potential exclusions based on race and sexuality were prevalent in schools but found that teachers rarely explored the ways in which these exclusions were perpetuated. Because the study focused on understanding exclusions in relationship to citizenship education curriculum, they failed to examine ways in which the teachers themselves might be perpetuating various oppressions based on their own socio-political biases and prejudices. Considering the ways in which teachers own socio-political commitments shape the ways they understand themselves and their teaching activities is vital, particularly in light of

promoting equity and inclusion in war-affected school settings, that are notorious for marginalizing students who navigate multiply marginalized intersections (Handy & Annamma, in review; Thomas et al., 2016).

Psychosocial Context and its Impact on Teachers and their Teaching Activities The psychosocial context in war-affected settings shape teacher roles and responsibilities. The high-volume of studies in the review reveal the ways in which psycho-social, mental health issues are prioritized in war-affected schools. These priorities are based on identifying and addressing particular needs in students exposed to war. Al-Obaidi et al., (2016) examined the mental health and service needs of primary teachers in Iraq. Teachers reported substantial mental health and behavioral problems in primary school children and the urgent need for school-based mental health programs to address these needs. In addressing these needs, teachers participated in activities geared toward building student resilience (Thomas et al, 2016), managing trauma related behavior (Al-Obadi et al, 2013), and minimizing war-related stress (Willis & Nagel, 2014). These studies created opportunities for teachers to carefully examine the impact of war on students' psychosocial wellbeing. For example, Thomas et al., (2016) asked teachers to describe the psychosocial impact of armed conflict on their students and the common ways in which they support resilience building in students. Teachers recognized the impact of poverty, disability, and emotional struggles on student wellbeing.

In addition to delivering academic curriculum, these studies revealed how teachers in war-affected schools are held responsible for the psycho-social well-being of their students. These studies promoted the view that teachers (if adequately prepared and supported) can significantly contribute to the psychosocial well-being of their students. Willis & Nagel (2014) positioned teachers as "central in the rehabilitation of children who have suffered the effects of

stress and trauma" (p. 37). In this study they asked teachers about the ways in which they helped students overcome learning challenges caused by stress and trauma. They found that teachers promoting psychosocial wellbeing by improving students' self-esteem, sense of security and safety. Teachers in these studies are positioned as proxy mental health professionals, tasked with implementing practices and processes that are specifically geared toward student well-being. In assigning and imposing these roles upon teachers, these studies failed to examine the ways in which teacher subjectivities shaped how they engaged in these roles. In these studies teachers homogenized as care-givers. It was assumed that all teachers are capable of providing such services regardless of teachers own subjectivities and were willing to take on these roles. For example, Panter-Bric, Eggerman, Gonzalez and Safdar (2009) pointed out the substantial mental health problems in youth age 11-16. Their study suggested the importance of introducing school-based initiatives to address these needs where teachers would play an important role in providing services. In making this recommendation, this study did not solicit teacher perspectives on their abilities and willingness to take on these additional tasks. This oversight is noteworthy, in relation to research that documents the numerous ways teachers are already overwhelmed by increased workloads in war-affected school settings (Wolf et al., 2015).

The psychosocial context also impacted the ways in which teachers viewed themselves. In these studies teachers shared their opinions, beliefs, ideologies and experiences. They described their own life histories and other social-cultural realities that shape their work as teachers (Bekerman, 2004; Bekerman & Zembylas, 2010). Kirk and Winthorp (2008) interviewed teachers in community-based schools in Afghanistan where teachers described the ways in which they understood their roles, their responsibilities and how these factors impacted their teaching. For example, female teachers saw their vocation as a means of developing future

generations and the importance of continuing their work despite gender-based constraints they face in Afghanistan.

Teachers in these studies described the ways in which their psychosocial wellbeing was related to their competencies in carrying out teaching activities. Akar (2012) found that none of the 19 civics teachers he interviewed received formal training in the subject area, nor did they possess any teaching qualification. The teachers explained that they trained themselves to by teaching and reading and felt confident in teaching the subject even though none of them had even taken civics as a subject when they were in school. Teacher's also offered their views on the challenges they faced in war-affected settings. Wolf et al., (2015) examined the cumulative risk teachers faced due to poor and inconsistent pay, inadequate poor support and training in subject areas, and lack of teaching experience. They found that in varying degrees these factors contributed to higher burnout levels, low motivation, and low job dissatisfaction. Specifically, they found that teachers' motivation and burnout levels are related to their subjective work conditions such as poor-quality supervision, problematic school environments, lack of parental support and feeling unsafe.

The impact of psychosocial condition in war-affected settings have a profound impact in the ways teachers understand themselves and their teaching activities. These studies failed to recognize the ways in which teachers own subjectivities (i.e., gender, ethnicity) and experiences (i.e., exposure to war) might shape their abilities to carry out these tasks. For instance, Al-Obaidi et al., (2013) surveyed 148 primary school teachers based on a closed response questionnaire adopted from the United States. A section of the instrument asked teachers to rate the degree to which they believed that specific child mental health and behavioral issues were problems in schools and their competence in handling these problems using Likert scales. The study

highlighted that “more than one third of teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed with the following statements: ‘I feel safe and secure’ (37%)”, (p.173), revealing the ways in which teacher psychosocial wellbeing is compromised. Furthermore, they reported that only “Thirty-seven per cent were ‘very confident’ that they could manage students’ reactions to disaster or trauma, yet only 27% were ‘very confident’ that they could identify the students having stress reactions to disaster or trauma.” Interestingly, none of the recommendations provided in this study focused on ways to promote teacher wellbeing or even questioned if burdening teachers with these care-giver responsibilities was prudent. Rather, the recommendations were geared toward providing teachers with additional training to take on these tasks.

Inclusions and Omissions in Conceptual Frameworks and Theoretical Underpinnings

The following discussion highlights possible ways in which to re(imagine) how research studies in war-affected settings are conceptualized. Incorporating theories that seek to center equity and inclusivity, decolonize knowledge, and recognize the culturally mediated nature of activities may open conceptual and methodological opportunities that provide a rich and thick description of the learning and teaching activities in war-affected schools. Conceptual frameworks guiding these studies drew from a wide variety of theories. They included a mix of critical theories and non-critical theories. Critical theories included citizenship theories such as humanistic and democratic values, inclusive participation, dialogic practice (Akar, 2006, Akar, 2012; Akar, 2016). They also included cultural capital theories (Addi-Raccah & Grinshtain, 2016), critical history (Bekerman & Zembylas, 2010), critical realism (Lopez Cardozo & Hoeks, 2015) and critical discourse analysis (Nasser & Wong, 2013). Non-critical theories included ecological resilience (Thomas et al., 2016), neurobiological and social learning theories (Willis & Nagel, 2014; Winthorp & Kirk, 2008), attribution theories (Breidlid, 2010), human rights

theories (Vega & Bajaj, 2016), cultural and social hypothesis of segregation (Kilpatric & Leitch, 20014) and social justice theories (Duncan & Cardozo, 2017). The theoretical tools illuminated the complex nature of factors that mediated learning and teaching in war-affected settings. For example, conceptual frameworks that focused on psycho-social well-being, drew from theories of ecological resilience (Thomas et al, 2016), and cumulative risk (Wolf et al 2015). Theories focused on learning included psychological, social learning (Winthorp & Kirk, 2008; Willis & Nagel, 2014), neurobiological learning (Willis & Nagel. 2014), and dialogic pedagogy (Akar, 2016).

It is noteworthy that none of the studies reviewed used narrow conceptual frameworks. Mostly they incorporated wider conceptualizations of the constructs they examined. These expansive views captured the complex nature of learning and teaching in war affected settings. For instance, Willis and Nagel (2014) used social psychological and neurobiological theories of development to inform the ways in which they conceptualized teacher roles in supporting children experiencing stress and trauma. By using both theories the study highlighted the ways in which teacher and student experiences are mediated by biological and social factors.

The abundant use of critical theories in these studies is commendable. They promoted opportunities for participants to think critically about issues of power and oppression that permeate war-affected schools settings. For instance, Nasser and Wong (2013) noted how their framework enables ways in which to understand how student teacher interactions are shaped by micro and macro construction of identities. They noted that their framework is equipped to index oppression in the classroom with respect to race, gender, and class, and provide ways in which to think about improving classroom interactions.

Despite the abundant use of critical theories informing the conceptual frameworks of

these studies, none of these theories were utilized to examine equity and inclusion specifically. In one example, Vega and Bajaj (2016) specifically focused on marginalized student populations in war-affected contexts. The study was framed by focusing on the right to education. The theoretical tools made available allowed these researchers to examine school practices that perpetuated marginalization. The framework encompassed possibilities of "dealing with the complexities of students' backgrounds and current conditions of instability and poverty, overcoming the challenges of program design and the lack of teacher training and professional development for working with marginalized children, and innovating in order to create a culture of care and belonging in order to support student retention and achievement" (p.365). The right to education framework that informed this study paid close attention to improving access, learning opportunities and achievement (Kozleski &Waitoller, 2010). Yet, the study did not address other components of equity and inclusion that include the re-distribution of resources and re-presentation of student voices.

By ignoring expansive notions of equity and inclusion, these studies failed to examine the ways in which teaching activities perpetuate, maintain, and legitimize inequities and exclusion. In the same study, Vega and Bajaj (2016) found that the teachers positioned themselves as saviors. Teachers took on the onus of supporting and rescuing students who displayed multiple challenges. As these researchers point out, the teacher's commitment to mitigating marginalization is commendable. However, the theoretical framework that informed this study did not create opportunities for teachers to critically evaluate the "savior" positioning. As such, it failed to examine the possibility of the ways in which teachers may be complicit in perpetuating marginalization through their practices.

Overall these studies used an impressive range of critical theories. However, critical

theories addressing colonialism, coloniality and modernity were notably absent. Most studies in this review took place in third world, formerly and currently colonized, developing countries. As such, the absence of decolonizing framing is at least curious, if not concerning. Critical theories critiquing colonialism and neo-colonialism in war-affected school settings recognizes historicity and deeply entrenched nature of the legacies of oppression that shape contextual factors that mediate teaching activities (Gutiérrez, 2016). For example, Nasser and Wong (2013) explored socio-political and pedagogical complexities in teaching English as a foreign language in the West Bank. They examined views on the Palestinian curriculum in relation to English, the perceived utility of English and so on, but they did not question how coloniality is implicated by the use of English as a global language, particularly in a state that is presently under occupation. Examining the complexities of teaching English using theories that aim to decolonize knowledge may have revealed the historical legacies of oppression entrenched in language learning practices in war-affected settings (Sharkey, 2014).

Failing to challenge colonialism results in inadequate views of teaching activities taking place in war-affected settings. For example, Yair and Alayan (2009) examined the challenges Palestinian students and teachers face in attending schools in East Jerusalem. The examination of these challenges was theorized use the political theory, the state of exception. This theory explains challenges that ensue as a result of ambivalent institutional arrangements, whereby ostensibly democratic governments maintain undemocratic processes. They found, widespread discrimination and resentment among Israeli's and Palestinian's, which resulted in teachers veering away from progressive teaching strategies that might expose "an Israeli act of colonization" (p.252). Palestinian Teachers viewed Israeli occupation as colonization. These views resulted in teachers avoiding progressive teaching strategies like classroom discussions,

afraid that it may reveal their discontent with present educational arrangements. Unfortunately, the conceptualization of this study was not equipped to critique colonialism despite teachers constantly brining up Israeli occupation as a form of colonization that impacted their teaching activities. Conceptualizing this study from a decolonizing point of view may have created opportunities to critique colonialism and revealed the multiple ways in which colonialism continues to silence and marginalize teachers and students in war-affected schools.

The conceptual frameworks guiding these studies illuminated the complex challenges teachers experienced in war-affected settings. These challenges were narrowly conceptualized as barriers that thwarted effective teaching, failing to recognize their potential for acting as levers for meaningful change. Re-conceptualizing challenges as tensions and contradiction, illuminate ways in which they can usher in change (Engeström, 1999). For example, Akar (2016) examined the utility of dialogic pedagogies in promoting social cohesion and peace building. He identified two primary tensions. He noted "the first tension appears in what may be seen as contrasting purposes of speech in dialogic pedagogies. On the one hand, spaces for talking when collaborating are opportunities to resolve differences or find ways to agree on actions through mutual understanding. On the other hand, we see dialogue in peacebuilding as a mechanism to understand others' points of views with- out any intention to persuade… The second tension pertains to teacher professional development for transforming didactic pedagogies rooted in conflict into ones that necessitate collaboration and construction of knowledge through dialogic engagement. Such a transformation of classroom practice follows the restructuring of learning objectives so that they are aligned with classroom pedagogies". (p.59). Akar (2016), skillfully identifies and articulates these tensions, but offers little guidance in terms of how these tensions could be leveraged for meaningful change. Interestingly, in this quote he acknowledges the

presence of tensions and the need for authentic ways of addressing tensions but does not position tensions themselves as creating this potential for change. Theorizing tensions in ways that illuminate their potential for transformative change may have expanded the ways in which this study could have addressed these challenges.

Methodological Trends: Re (imagining) Research Studies

The studies reviewed utilized an impressive range of methodologies. Methodological characteristics of all the studies are summarized in Table 2. Sample sizes varied greatly based on the nature of the studies. The sample sizes in qualitative studies typically ranged from four participants (Akar, 2006) to about 70 (Cardozo & Hoeks, 2015). In survey studies, sample sizes were significantly higher with some studies comprising over 900 participants (Addi-Raccah & Grinshtain, 2016). Sampling was mostly purposive. Teachers who participated in these studies were selected based on the types of schools they taught, region where the school was situated, curriculum implemented, subject area, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, language, and exposure to conflict. Studies also used convenience sampling techniques, recruiting participants from teacher training workshops or professional development programs. Even so, researchers employed maximum variation sampling strategies within their convenient sampling processes to account for subjective variabilities among participants (Vega & Bajaj, 2016, Zembylas, Charalambous & Lesta, 2016). Survey studies typically used stratified random sampling or random sampling processes. Impact evaluation studies used random and cluster randomized sampling techniques.

In analyzing data, qualitative studies typically used thematic coding techniques while quantitative studies used descriptive analysis, regression analysis and at times hierarchical linear modeling. Data sources used in these studies included, standardized survey tools (i.e. cumulative

risk index), written questionnaires, in-depth, open ended, semi structured interviews, participant and non-participant observations, field notes, audio-video recordings, drawings, maps and photographs. The methodological variations in terms of sampling, data sources and methods of analysis used in the studies reviewed are truly impressive, considering the challenges of conducting research in schools affected by wars (Cohen & Arieli, 2011).

Of the 33 studies reviewed, 23 are qualitative studies, where researchers prioritized in-depth, contextual understandings of learning and teaching in war-affected settings. The high number of qualitative studies in the articles reviewed is indicative of the utility of qualitative methods in answering questions related to teacher experiences and their activities in war-affected school settings. Studies utilizing qualitative methods generated data that invested in providing contextually sensitive understandings of the complex conditions that permeate war-affected school settings. Participatory action research methods were noticeably absent. While the studies in this review ensured that teachers provided opinions and shared experiences with researchers, none produced research in which teachers actively participated in the co-construction of knowledge. Teachers did not have opportunities to deeply engage in the interpretation of data. Instead, their roles were relegated to being study subjects in which participation was limited to answering questions as determined by the research agenda.

In the critique that follows, I discuss importance of teacher participation in conducting research in war affected settings. I use the term participation specifically in relation to designed based participatory action research (Bang & Vossoughi, 2016). In design based participatory action research, teacher participation is intentionally prioritized. Teachers are positioned as co-investigators, whose voices are prioritized teacher (i.e., insider), in the collection and interpretation of data (Cammarota & Fine, 1998). Furthermore, interventions are introduced as a

part of the research study, where teachers get to participate in data collection and analysis and in determining the outcomes of the interventions (Bang & Vossoughi, 2016).

Limiting teacher participation reifies asymmetrical power relationships between the researcher and researched (Smith, 2012). It frames the researcher as the sole constructor of knowledge, relegating the teachers into positions of lessor power limiting their opportunities to engage as co-constructors of knowledge (Erickson, 2006). Studies seeking to decolonize the ways in which knowledge is constructed in research, prioritize teacher participation in ways that transforms their roles into co-constructors of knowledge (Erickson, 2006; Smith, 2012). This resulted in researchers drawing conclusion that might have not revealed the full extent of the factors that mediated their activities. For example, Breidlid (2010) used ethnographic methods that included field work and interviews to examine educational discourses that were mediated by tenuous political realities in Sudan. He found deeply entrenched animosities between teachers from the North and South. His analysis of the data continued to position teacher responses within and us versus them rhetoric as directed by the theory that informed this study (i.e., attribution theory).

Alternatively, if teachers were given opportunities to share their perspectives outside the dichotomy set up by the researcher, they may have provided more nuanced views. As such the co-construction knowledge may have resulted in generating data that is rich and complex, providing a more accurate view of the factors that mediate activities in war-affected schools. Prioritizing participation creates pedagogical spaces for teachers to engage in praxis (i.e., reflection and action) by engaging with research data (Freire, 1993). Reflecting on data generated by the research studies in which they participate creates opportunities for teachers to think about their own practices and challenge the ways in which they may be complicit in

oppression (Spivak, 1988; Mills & Lewis, 2003). For instance, Thomas et al., (2016) found that parents in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka complained that their children were treated poorly due to caste affiliations. During the researchers had access to this data and had opportunities to ask teachers about their perspectives on caste issues. A valuable opportunity for praxis was missed by limiting teacher engagement with data.

By engaging with data generation in meaningful ways, teachers play integral roles in interpreting the data. Teacher engagement shapes the nature of data by building trustworthiness beyond perfunctory member checking mechanisms. For example, Zembylas & Bekerman (2008) examined how narratives of pain and dangerous memories shape pedagogy. Teacher narratives were used to theorize how these memories impacted pedagogy. For example, a teacher stated "It gets me angry when a Palestinian who doesn't support terrorism, doesn't condemn it. He says 'he [the terrorist] is a part of my people.' Now, when I'm with friends and family and I know that they serve in the Territories [conquered by Israel in the 1967 war], I don't necessarily condemn it." (p.135). Following this except, the researcher (Bekerman) writes "it seems that from Yoni's perspective, Israeli Palestinians, in spite of their present situation as a peripheral and subjugated minority in the State of Israel, should condemn terrorism as outright evil as he does" (p.135). While the researcher's reflection is later discussed within sound theoretical constructs showing the relationship between dangerous memories and pedagogy, Yoni, the teacher did not have opportunities to interpret his perspective within these constructs. As a result, what remains is a teacher's response and a researcher's interpretation of that response. This limited the ways in which a teacher's interpretation (of the same data) could have added texture and richness to the interpretation.

Conclusion

This comprehensive literature review revealed important characteristics of the rigorous empirical research studies conducted in war-affected settings. This review examined salient trends in purposes, conceptual framing, and methodologies. The critique of these studies discussed its omissions and limitations based on the conceptual framework that guides this dissertation. Importantly, the critiques served as ways in which to (re) imagine the ways in which research could be conducted in war-affected settings that adds to the complexity and richness of the findings and their implications. Overall, this review highlighted the importance of advancing equity and inclusion. It reiterated the significance of resisting hegemonic discourses mediated by colonial legacies and neo-colonial commitments. This review pointed out the ways in which designed based participatory action research enhances qualitative studies conducted in war-affected settings.

This dissertation study used the findings of this comprehensive, systematic literature review in its conceptual and methodological decisions. For example, this study revealed the ways in which teachers are often viewed as implementors of interventions and initiative, rather than active decision makers. As such, decolonizing knowledges by prioritizing as a part of the conceptual framework of this study where teacher voices were given credence over researcher viewpoints. This framing enabled the use of methodological tools such as journey maps (Annamma,2016), that created opportunities for teachers to tell their stories in ways that emphasized different aspects of their own subjectivities. This dissertation introduced a design-based intervention, which engaged teachers in video-based critical reflection activities. These activities were carefully incorporated into the conceptualization of this study and used methodological tools such as videos that have proven to be effective in helping teachers understand their subjectivities and teacher activities (Knight et al., 2012). Although teachers

were not part of designing the intervention (which would have been ideal), they were given many opportunities to engage with the intervention in ways that they could exercise autonomy. For instance, teachers viewed the videos and reflected on them before being interviewed by me.

The findings of this comprehensive literature review shaped the contours of this study in important ways. The ways in which these themes were incorporated could be seen in chapter 3, in relation to methods utilized. Likewise, the results chapters draw on these important insights, such as revealing the ways disjunctures in student and teacher activities occur that thwart equity and inclusion. The themes that emerged discussed in this literature review reverberate throughout the chapters that follow, accentuating the importance of building on existing knowledges and learning from them as means of improving present research endeavors.

Table 2

Study Methodology Characteristics

Authors	Type of study	Sample Size: Teachers	Sampling Technique	Analysis	Data Sources
Addi-Raccah & Grinshtain (2016)	Survey	959	Random selection: Schools	Descriptive analysis, Multivariate regression	Survey Questionnaire
Akar (2006)	Interview	4	Purposive: Civics teachers	Qualitative coding	Semi-structured interviews
Akar (2012)	Interview	19	Purposive: Civics teachers	Qualitative coding	Semi-structured interviews
Akar (2016)	Interview	7	Purposive: Civics teachers	Qualitative coding	Classroom observations, Teacher interviews, student written reflections
Al-Obadi et al (2013)	Survey	148	Semi-Purposive: Schools	Not Specified	Closed response written survey questionnaire
Bekerman &Zembylas (2010)	Interview	14	Convenience: In-service training workshop	Descriptive analysis, Pearson correlations, MANOVA	Field notes, videotaped interview recordings
Bekerman (2004)	Two year Ethnography	12	Not Specified	Qualitative coding	Semi-structured interviews, systematic and informal classroom observations

Breidlid (2010)	Interviews, content analysis	54	Purposive: Ethnicity and education roles	Qualitative coding	Open-ended semi-structured interviews, non-participant classroom observations, curriculum analysis
Caplelo& Cabrita (2015)	Mixed methods	200	Not Specified	Qualitative coding	Semi-structured interviews, focus groups, observations, field notes, inventory questionnaire
Cardozo & Hoeks (2015)	Ethnographic field studies: 6 months	70<	Not Specified		Interviews, focus groups, background surveys, participatory observations
Duncan & Cardozo (2017)	Mixed methods	15<	Purposive Ethnicity and religion	Content analysis, qualitative coding, descriptive statistics	Semi-structured Interviews, focus groups, participant observations, student questionnaires
Hromadžić (2008)	Ethnography:22months	Not specified	Purposive: Ethnicity Not specified	Not Specified	Multisited participant observations, interviews Semi-structured interviews, focus groups, classroom observations
Kilpatrick & Leitch (2004)	Case study schools	44<	Purposive: IRC-supported home-based schools	Not Specified	Interviews, written Questionnaires,

					classroom observations, discussion groups
Kirk & Winthorp (2008)	Interview	Not specified	Not specified	Not specified	Interviews, focus groups
Nasser & Wong (2013)	Interview	Not specified	Purposive: participants of training program	Constant comparison	Semi-structured interviews
Niens, O'Conner & Smith (2013)	Interview	13	Stratified Random sampling		Self-rating scales, screening instruments, questionnaires
Panter-Brick et al (2009)	Interview, cross-sectional survey	358	Purposive: SES, Sociolinguistically similar	Narrative analysis	Interviews, focus groups
Thomas et al (2016)	Interview	Not specified	Purposive: SES, ethnic/religious, exposure to conflict	Not specified	Focus groups, semi-structured interviews
Tol et al (2010)	Interview	57	Not specified	Thematic analysis	Participant-observations, interviews, focus groups
Van Ommering (2011)	Ethnography:9 months	Not specified	Not specified	Linear regression, logistic regression, multivariate	Participant observations, field diaries, photographs, maps, drawings, sketches, audio-video

Van Ommering (2017)	Ethnography:16 months	Not specified		analysis, content analysis	recordings, semi-structured interviews
			Maximum variation sampling	Thematic analysis	Interviews, focus groups, non-participant observations
Vega & Bajaj (2016)	Qualitative case study	12	Not specified	Grounded theory approach	In-depth interviews, focus groups, Survey
			Not specified		Open-ended interviews
Weinstein, Freedman & Hughson (2007)	Qualitative case study: country	127	Purposive: IRC-Healing classroom initiative	Not specified	In-depth interviews, focus groups, school mapping, video, photo documentations, text book analysis
Willis & Nagel (2014)	Phenomenographic	7			
Winthorp & Kirk (2008)	Qualitative in-depth studies: country	Not specified	Random sampling	Not specified	Cumulative risk index survey
			Cluster randomized trial		Survey interviews
Wolf et al (2015)	Impact evaluation study	456			In-depth interviews
Wolf et al (2015)	Impact evaluation study	346	Purposive: Ethnicity and region	Not specified	
	Interview	12	Purposive: teachers in the Israeli Jewish secular education	Not specified	On-line Quantitative and qualitative questionnaires

Yair & Alayan (2009)			system		
Yemini, Bar-Nissan & Yardeni (2014)	Mixed methods	251	Not specified	Qualitative coding	Not specified
Zembylas & Bekerman (2008)	Longitudinal ethnographic study	Not specified	Convenience: Teachers in peace education workshops	Qualitative coding	Audio-video recordings of workshops, in-depth interviews
Zembylas, Charalambous & Charalmbous (2012)	Qualitative study	7	Purposive maximum variation: teachers in Greek-Cypriot schools	Not specified	In-depth interviews Survey questionnaire
Zembylas et al (2016)	Qualitative study	24	Purposive	Descriptive statistics, inter-correlations, hierarchical linear modeling Not specified	Interviews, Survey questionnaire
Zembylas et al (2011)	Mixed methods	660 (survey);40 (interviews)		Qualitative Coding, descriptive analysis	

				Not specified
				Qualitative coding
				Thematic data analysis
				Frequency measures, thematic coding

Chapter 3: Methodology

In chapters one and two I explained the significance of examining the factors that mediate teacher subjectivities and their teaching practices in war-affected schools. I argued for the necessity of conducting research using expansive conceptual frameworks and methodologies. In this chapter I describe the methodologies used to answer the research questions. First, I provide a brief overview of the study. Then, I explain how the methodologies aligned with the conceptual framework. The research design details participant and school site selection, describes data sources, and explains the data analytic plan. I close with a researcher positionality statement reiterating my commitment toward critical, empirical research and scholarship.

Overview of the Study

Schools in war-affected settings are established to usher in a sense of normalcy and stability (Barakat, Connolly, Hardman & Sundaram, 2013; Buckland, 2005). Nonetheless, research indicates that schools fall short of these aspirations due to social, political, cultural and inter/intra personal complexities that abound in war-affected settings. Some of these complexities include extreme poverty, safety concerns, dilapidated infrastructure, limited public services and poor achievement levels (Buckland, 2005; Winthrop & Kirk, 2008). Additionally, in countries like Sri Lanka, teachers and students operate within the social structures of race, ethnic, and caste hierarchies, rural isolation, gender disparities and dis/ability constructions that marginalize both teachers and students in ominous ways (Handy & Annamma, in review; Thomas et al., 2016). These realities are further complicated by a confluence of factors related to re-building lives in the aftermath of war. For instance, re-establishing social relationships is challenged by ubiquity of disabilities, deaths, torture and disappearances of loved ones (Somasundaram, 2014). Furthermore, re-building livelihoods exerts tremendous strain within

communities of high unemployment levels, competition for scarce resources and opportunities, and poor public services (Buckland, 2005).

Schools are re-established with little to no regard for sociocultural, historical inequities and exclusions that prevailed prior to war. This disregard, along with other societal constraints, significantly shape school activities (Winthrop & Kirk, 2008; King, 2008). Over time, the concentration and conflations of these challenges drain resources and overwhelm school systems and the people who work within them. As a result, schools in war-affected settings continue to be dependent on aid and outside expertise (Davies, 2004). Often this aid and expertise are offered by Western-centric organizations whose hegemonic ideologies and colonial legacies significantly shape how learning and teaching in war-affected settings are understood (Goonatilake, 2006). Importantly, they shape the ways in which teachers understand themselves and their teaching activities, and what counts as equitable and inclusive education (Corbett & Slee, 2000; Gee, 2001; Holland & Lave, 2001; Lave, 1996).

Teachers working in these schools are often positioned in unfavorable ways (Seymore, 2014). In addition, extant research documents lack of teachers, high teacher turnover and teacher truancy in war-affected schools. Teachers typically are unqualified and under prepared (Buckland, 2005; Davies, 2004). They engage in ineffective and punitive teaching activities marginalizing vulnerable students (Handy & Annamma, in review; Vega & Bajaj, 2016). Research dedicated to mitigating these problems rarely has created opportunities for teachers to identify and address them. Teachers seldom are positioned individually or collectively as capable of advancing equity and inclusion by engaging in transformative praxis (Freire, 1993; Lave, 1996).

This study positioned teachers as knowledge generators capable of advancing equity and

inclusion. Teachers engaged in critical-reflection activities, creating spaces in which they talked about themselves and their teaching activities (hooks, 2014). Teachers provided an in-depth understanding of institutional, socio-cultural and subjective factors mediating their teaching activities (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Holland & Lave, 2001; Lave, 1996). In particular, this study examined the ways in which teaching activities perpetuated, maintain and legitimated inequities and exclusions (Slee, 2009). By gaining a better understanding of the factors mediating teacher subjectivities and their teaching activities, this study theorizes ways in which inequitable and exclusionary teaching practices that marginalize multiply-marginalized youth could be disrupted.

Three research questions framed this study: (a) what factors mediate the ways in which teachers understand themselves and their teaching activities, and how do these factors mediate these understandings?; (b) how are inequitable and exclusionary teaching activities perpetuated, maintained and legitimized in war-affected school settings?; and (c) how do teachers engage in critical reflection in ways that advance transformative praxis centering equity and inclusion?

Methodological Considerations and Conceptual Alignment

This section illuminates the compatibility between the conceptual framework and the methods used in this study. The conceptual framework provided multiple theoretical lenses revealing the ways in which inequitable and exclusionary teaching activities are perpetuated, maintained and, legitimized (Slee, 2009). Constructs predicated on critical inclusive education determine what counts as equity and inclusion (Artiles & Kozleski, 2016; Naraian, 2017; Slee, 2011). Equity and inclusion are examined by identifying processes that re-distribute educational resources in ways that advance access, opportunity, participation and achievement (Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013). These processes recognize individual differences and represent the decisions of

marginalized groups in leading the agenda toward equity and inclusion (Fraser, 2008). Disability critical theory (DisCrit), and critical disability studies (Erevelles, 2011; Grech, 2015; Siebers, 2008) provided important lenses through which inequities and exclusions could be viewed.

Processes perpetuating inequities and exclusions were viewed as uncritical functions of ableism and other social constructions of race, gender, class and sexuality (Annamma, 2016). DisCrit provided ways in which to understand colonizing, dehumanizing discourses that prevailed in centers of power that determined what counted as ability, who is counted as dis/abled and what these determinations meant for those who navigate these spaces (Annamma, Cornner & Ferri, 2013). Furthermore, critical disability studies that foregrounded feminist, queer, crip theories described the fluidity of what constituted ability and disability both as embodied and socially constructed (Johnson & McRuer, 2014; Kafer, 2013; Puar, 2017).

Critical decolonizing feminist theories centered marginalized teacher voices by providing them with important tools in recognizing the ways in which their teaching activities may marginalize multiply-marginalized youth. These theories foregrounded intersectionality creating opportunities for teachers to understand their own subjectivities and the subjectivities of their students typically situated within complex and dynamic webs of power, privilege and oppression (Anzaldúa, 1987; Crenshaw, 1991; Lugones, 2003). Critical decolonizing feminist theories reject the deficit positioning of teachers and youth and, instead position them as knowledge generators who work under multiple constraints (Greene, 1978; Spivak, 1988). As knowledge generators teachers recognized the ways in which their activities are problematic and possessed the capacity and agency to address them in ways that advance equity and inclusion (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Naraian, 2013; Puar, 2017).

This study was conducted in an ongoing activity system (Blackler, 2009; Flick, 1999),

where the unit of analysis included teachers and students engaged in learning and teaching activities (Collins, 2003; Vygotsky, 1987). Third generation cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) pays attention to the ways in which all learning and teaching activities are culturally mediated by multiple social, historical, and institutional structures and relationships (Engeström, 1999; Nummijoki, Engeström & Sannino, 2018). CHAT was used to foreground the complex, multi-layered nature of learning and teaching activities and processes interacting within and between several activity systems. It captured the intricate nature of interpersonal, intrapersonal and institutional factors shaping teaching activities (Cole, 1996; Gee, 2001; Holland & Lave, 2001). CHAT also was used to examine the potential within tensions, contradictions and critical junctures in advancing equity or inclusion systems (Cappoccia & Kelemen, 2007; Engeström, 2015; Smith, 2005).

This conceptual framework offered multiple theoretical lenses to examine learning and teaching activities in war-affected settings. Examining complex phenomena (i.e., teaching activities) through multiple theoretical lenses required methodological pluralism. Methodological pluralism incorporates multiple methodological tools, informing the ways in which data are gathered and analyzed (Katsiaficas, Futch, Fine & Selcuk, 2011; Mason, 2002). This study was conceptualized as participatory design research (Bang & Vossoughi, 2016). Participatory design research attends to power, historicity, and relational dynamics focusing on the forms of learning that occur and the knowledges created therein (Bang & Vossoughi, 2016). Thus, the research design includes opportunities for activities such as participant reflections to be introduced into the ongoing inquiry and for participants to engage in these activities in meaningful ways. For example, I shared with teachers the prominent themes that emerged during student reflections. Teachers had many opportunities to share their understandings on the concerns students brought

up, unpacking the ways in which they made meaning of student comments. Consequently, I shared the ways in which teachers responded to their concerns with students, which created opportunities for students to clarify, contradict and shape their own views. This study utilized ethnographic methods along with participatory action research in making visible the ways in which students and teachers participated in their school system study (Erickson, 2006). Ethnographic inquiry offered ways in which to obtain a deep understanding of factors that mediated teachers' understanding of themselves and their teaching activities, especially those that thwarted equity and inclusion.

The assemblage of ethnographic and participatory action research methods used in this study re-imagined the roles and responsibilities of the teachers and students (participants) who took part in the research project in important ways. These methods favored emic perspectives. The emic perspective functions as an important decolonizing move in dismantling hegemonic research discourses that favor outside abstracted points of view (Kirkland, 2006; Smith, 2012). By intentionally privileging the voices of the four focal teachers as the primary data sources, these methods provided several ways in which teachers could share their experiences, which revealed factors that mediated their understandings of themselves and their teaching activities. The reflection activities offered ample opportunities for teachers to reveal the complex ways in which their own histories and realities were deeply intertwined with the social, cultural, historical, and institutional histories and realities in which they were situated (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Perhaps most importantly, teachers were able to reveal the ways in coercive institutional factors, such as coercive accountability structures shaped their everyday practices.

These methodologies created opportunities for teachers to participate as co-constructors

of knowledge, establishing teachers as knowledge generators (hooks, 2014; Greene,1978; Smith, 2012; Spivak, 1988). Knowledge is co-constructed by teachers making explicit how they come to know what they know, and how their knowledges shape their teaching activities (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Moll, 1990). Knowledge is co-constructed within a community, incorporating knowledges generated collectively by the researcher, teachers and students (Cammarota & Fine, 2008). These methodologies intentionally positioned teachers' participation as praxis, advancing critical reflection and action (Freire, 1993). Here, teacher participation in critical reflection and action were geared toward dismantling inequitable and exclusionary teaching practices. Overall, these methodologies detailed and documented all the ways in which different types of data are collected and analyzed through continuous iterative learning processes (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003; Engeström, 2015).

Methodologies

In prioritizing these methodological considerations, I used two primary qualitative methodologies; ethnographic inquiry and participatory action research (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Campbell & Gregor, 2004; Erickson, 2006; Kirkland, 2006; Smith 2005). Ethnographic inquiry was situated in critical feminist foundations (Smith, 2005). They provided tools to examine inequities and exclusions mediated by powerful social relations in social institutions (Campbell & Gregor, 2004; Smith, 2005). Ethnographic methods revealed the iterative ways in which institutional and other ways of knowing are mediated by asymmetrical power relationships creating disjunctures within communities of practice (Smith, 2012). Furthermore, this form of inquiry focused on understanding how practices and processes work, making what is seen in social institutions more understandable (Campbell & Gregor, 2004). By focusing on how and why things work the way they do, ethnographic inquiry refrained from pathologizing or

valorizing teaching activities a-priori (Mohanty, 2003). All teaching activities in war affected settings are positioned as activities related to power, social locations, personal and institutional relationships and socialization. Ethnographic methods provided the tools to map these complex relationships and conditions within and between activity systems (Campbell & Gregor, 2004).

Ethnographic Inquiry Ethnographic inquiry produced opportunities for teachers to engage in praxis by sharing their experiences in interviews and focus group discussions. Because all activities taking place in social institutions are a deeply imbricated transactions between events and people in fields of relative power, ethnographic tools allowed teachers to explore and analyze their teaching activities not as merely technical tasks or isolated events but as complex functions. Methodological tools afforded by institutional ethnographic methods captured culturally mediated activities by recognizing the complex interplay between inter and intra subjective realties and institutional factors (Cole, 1996; Smith, 2005). They revealed disjunctures (Smith, 2005). Disjunctures are contradictions and critical junctures in institutional practices which have the potential to transform activity systems in service of equity and inclusion.

Participatory Action Research Teacher participation was prioritized in this study. The ways in which participation was organized was committed to privileging teacher voices, rejecting conducting research in non-participatory and non-collaborative ways. For example, teachers were given the opportunity to choose the ways in which they would like to engage in reflection activities determining its location, pace, frequency and which areas of their practices they wanted to focus on. Participatory action research methods worked in conjunction with ethnographic inquiry, favoring the emic perspective. The researcher's' etic perspective worked only as one element of the interpretive bridge between researcher and participants (Erickson, 2006; Kirkland, 2014; Smith, 2005). Participatory action research provided important tools in re-

imagining the ways in which teachers as participants engaged in research projects and the knowledges they produced as a result. Participatory action research methods explicitly focused on power relations and praxis that disrupted and dismantled systemic oppression in social institutions (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Freire,1993; Irizarry & Brown, 2014). The ownership of identifying how teaching practices perpetuated, maintained and legitimized inequity and exclusion and, the work toward dismantling these injustices were advanced by teachers (Giroux, 2009). This important decolonizing move mitigated the influence of predominantly western-centric research and technical expertise that often shaped how activities in war-affected school settings are viewed (Smith, 2012).

In this study teachers engaged in in-depth critical reflection activities throughout the study. Their participation in these activities favored authentic understandings of complex realities. Participation humanized research participants and recognized their capability and agency in transforming their inequitable and exclusionary social, cultural, historical realties (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Paris & Winn, 2014; Smitherman & Van Dijk, 1988). Instead of importing and implementing pre-set professional development initiatives and interventions from the outside, this study paid attention to the locally situated ways of knowing (Freire, 1998; Lave, 1996). These methods provided teachers with the tools to study problems of inequity and exclusion and learn from them. The knowledges they generated propelled them to engage in transformative praxis by invoking ways of personal and social change (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Willis, 1977). Teacher participation in this study is a pedagogical learning endeavor that was aimed at raising critical consciousness. Critical consciousness developed political consciousness, generated dialog, co-constructed knowledges, and resisted inequity and exclusion (Freire, 1998). Importantly, the knowledges co-constructed through critical consciousness were

situated in teachers' socio, cultural, historical and institutional realities (Irizarry & Brown, 2014; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Moll, 1990).

Sampling School Sites and Participants

Study Site The research site was a school situated in the war-affected Northern Province of Sri Lanka. This school, Vairamutu Vidyalam (pseudonym) was purposely selected based on a research study I conducted in 2015-2016. The majority of the participants (i.e., multiply-marginalized youth) in that study attend this school. Youth in this study described the ways in which teachers and their teaching activities perpetuated, maintained and legitimized inequitable and exclusionary conditions that impeded their ability to access education resources (Handy & Annamma, in review). This study revealed the nature of problematic practices from the youths' point of view. Therefore, it seemed prudent to study the same school context from the point of view of the teachers.

The town in which this school was situated was a strong hold of the former rebel group LTTE. It was an important administrative and military center in the de-facto state they created. As a result, toward the end of the war, these areas were seriously affected accounting for heavy casualty rates and the destruction of infrastructure. This school is one of the only secondary schools in the area. Most youth from surrounding villages attend this school. Demographically the ethnic majority in this district are Tamils (88%), where 75% are Hindu's and 13% are Christian (Department of Census and Statistics Sri Lanka, 2012). Overall, this school and the surrounding villages rank among the poorest areas in the country. High unemployment rates and low household incomes, account for extreme poverty positioning this area below the National poverty line (Bowden & Binns, 2016; Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka, 2012).

In addition to poverty, some villages in this area are marginalized due to their low caste

status (Tanges & Silva, 2009). As a result, even though several development efforts have been initiated after the war, these areas receive little to no support compared to more highly regarded areas that were affected by war (Northern Education System Review, 2014). Typically, there is inconsistent electricity, scarce running water and inadequate public services such as transport. The demographic data of teachers who served in these schools are unavailable, although it is safe to assume that they belong to the Tamil ethnic minority. What is known is that there is a deficit of teachers at all grade levels and that most teachers currently serving in these schools are underprepared (Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka; Northern Education System Review, 2014).

Participants

***Teachers*.** My primary research participants were four Tamil speaking, secondary school teachers, out of 76 teachers in this school. Two of my participants are female and two of them male. The nature of this study required constant and consistent interactions with participants. I purposively sample teachers working with multiply-marginalized youth. These teachers worked with students in lower ability tracks. In the previous study, students explained how they experienced severe levels of marginalization by teachers who taught core subjects (i.e., Math, Tamil Language, History and, English). This finding was significant because poor access to these core subjects impeded students' ability to participate and succeed in high-stakes national exams. Considering the criticality of these subjects, three of the teachers in this study taught Math, Tamil Language and English, while one of the teachers taught Art an Elective subject.

The remaining sampling criteria did not aim for maximum variation within participants, but fortunately resulted in being so (Ezzy, 2002; Patton, 1980). For example, three of my focal teachers did not live in this area but traveled from other parts of the province to teach. This criterion was important in revealing how teachers who see themselves as a part of the community

(as opposed to those who don't) understand themselves and their teaching practices. It also revealed important nuances in their social locations (i.e., caste status) in how they engaged in critical reflection activities conducted during the study. In addition, all four teachers had varying degrees of teacher preparation, while one teacher had none. The following table details their demographics.

Table 3

Focal Teacher Demographics

	Sex	*Age*	*Ethnicity*	*Living arrangement*	*Marital Status*	*Village of Origin*	*Years of Service*	*Content Area*	*Terminal Degree*	*Teacher Preparation*
Revathi	F	29	Tamil	Commutes Daily	Married	Jaffna: Point Pedro	5	Mathematics (Core)	Diploma in Math Education	College of Education, 2 Years
Bhavani	F	29	Tamil	Boarding House	Single	Jaffna: Chacheri Town	2	English (Core)	Graduate B.A Politics, Philosophy and Economics	21 Days of teacher training
Ravindran	M	39	Tamil	Own House	Married	Vauniya	9	History (Core)	Graduate B.A Political Science	None
Anojan	M	32	Tamil	School Quarters	Married	Uduvil: Jaffna	6	Art (Elective)	Graduate B.A Art History	None

All four teachers belonged to the Tamil Ethnic minority. Three of them were from Jaffna the capital city of the Northern Province. Jaffna is relatively well resourced in terms of public services that include a prestigious teaching hospital, as well as multiple elite private schools, and

libraries. The infrastructure disparities between Jaffna and the small town in which this study occurred are significant. The most prestigious caste groups comprise the majority of the population in Jaffna city. Ravindran was the only teacher who lived permanently in the district where the study school was located. The teachers' years of service ranged from two to nine years. Three of the teachers had bachelor's degrees while Revathi had a teaching diploma from a College of Education. Revathi the only teacher who had intensive teacher training before joining the teaching force.

Students. 40 multiply-marginalized youth from two of the lowest ability tracked groups were recruited as study participants. Nineteen girls and 21 boys participated in focus groups. They were all between 15 and 17 years of age. All students were taught by the focal teachers. In addition, Bhavani and Anojan, two of the focal teachers, served as the teachers in charge of the two lowest ability tracked groups. The 40 student participants provided their perspectives and shared their experiences in relation to teaching activities taking place in their schools. They also viewed teacher videos and shared their own understandings of teacher practices.

Data Sources and Data Collection

Seven data sources were utilized in this study. They included individual interviews, focus groups, video recordings, written reflections, classroom observations, field notes and journey maps.

Table 4

Corpus of Data

Data Sources	*Data Collection*	*Total #*
Individual Interviews: First Interviews	Approx. 2 per teacher	8 Interviews

Individual Interview: First Video Reflection	1 Interview per teacher	4 Interviews
Individual Interview: Second Video Reflection	1 Interview per teacher	4 Interviews
Final Interviews	1 Interview per teacher	4 Interviews
Educational Journey Maps	1 Map per teacher	3 Maps
Classroom Observations	Approx.15 per teacher	63 Observations
Video Recordings	Approx. 15 Video Clips per teacher	69 Video Clips
Teacher Written Reflections	2 Written Reflections per teacher	7 Written reflections
Teacher Reflection Focus Group (Member checking)	Focus groups	3 Focus groups
Student Focus groups	Focus groups	9 Focus groups
Student Focus groups (Member checking)	Focus groups	2 Focus groups
Other Observations: Outside classrooms	Observations	59

Each type of data was collected throughout the study (see Table 2). Although some data sources feature predominantly in answering specific research questions, all data sources were used iteratively to deepen the approach to answering each question. For example, the third question (i.e., how do teachers engage in critical reflection in ways that advance transformative praxis

centering equity and inclusion) was answered primarily by using written reflections and teacher reflection interviews. Similarly, the education journey maps, though used primarily to answer the first question (i.e., what factors mediate the ways in which teachers understand themselves and their teaching activities), also were used in the interviews to help the teachers connect their individual histories with their current assessments of their classroom practices.

All data sources were made available to all participants at all times, with the exception of student focus group, which were paraphrased and converted into observations and questions that were used during teacher reflection interviews. This was done to preserve student anonymity. Due to the iterative ways in which data sources were used to explore research questions, the following descriptions of the data sources illustrate how the data collection and subsequent analysis helped to explore all three research questions. Information teachers shared in their journey maps were utilized in subsequent interviews. For example, these two data sources were used to describe the way in which teachers experienced war related educational disruptions and how they use their own knowledge to understand the ways in which their students negotiated war related experiences.

Individual Interviews and Educational Journey Maps Following phenomenological traditions that recognize intersectionality of participants, and are critical in nature, as such, provided ways in which to ask reflexive questions (LeCompte & Schenul, 1999). Individual in-depth interviews were conducted with all four teacher participants throughout the study (Creswell, 2003; Seidman, 2013). Five to six in-depth interviews were conducted with each teacher intermittently throughout the three-months I spent in the research site (October 2017 to December 2017). The first set of interviews in which teachers participated were called first interviews. All interviews ranged from 20 to 30-minutes because free class period's teachers used for interviews were 40 minutes long. In these interviews, teachers described themselves, their backgrounds and their work. A semi-structured interview protocol provided opportunities for teachers to engage in an iterative process of describing, questioning, and clarifying throughout the interviews (Taylor & Bogodan, 2015; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). (see Appendix B).

The types of questions in the protocol included, "what kind of challenges did you face as child-youth going to in this area?" and "why do you think some of the students in your class struggle in math?" During these first in-depth individual interviews, teachers participated in educational journey mapping, and traced their learning and teaching trajectories (Annamma, 2016). This activity was designed to help teachers map important incidents in their lives that impacted their learning experiences (as students), and teaching before, during and after the war (Fine & Sirin, 2008; Kastaficas et al., 2011). (see Appendix C). Teachers did their journey maps as a take home task and brought it to all the interviews that were conducted after the first interviews. In addition, each teacher participated in a final interview discussing their thoughts on what they had learned in the past month. Three weeks after the completion of the study, I

conducted three focus groups with teachers (member checks) described later.

Student Focus Groups The students were recruited as secondary participants participate in focus groups. Focus groups solicited student perspectives on their teachers and their experiences with teaching activities (Gibbs, 2007; Patton, 1980). Students were asked general questions about their experiences and are given opportunities to respond to teacher video recordings (see Appendix E). In each focused group interview, I used a combination of question, some were general questions (i.e., important incidents they experienced between focus groups) and topic-based (respond to teacher videos, relate their experiences of inequity and exclusion). Data that emerged from focus groups were analyzed separately and incorporated into teacher reflection activities (described later).

Classroom Observations and Field notes Sixty-three non-participant classroom observations were conducted in this study (Wragg, 2012). On average 15 classroom observations were conducted per focal teacher. The observations revealed day to day teaching practices and the various factors mediating teaching activities. A structured observation template based on the research questions guided these observations (Gillham, 2008) (see Appendix F). A detailed corpus of field notes emerging from this study was maintained throughout the study (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2011). Field notes were not limited to school activities. They documented all relevant formal and informal activities taking place in school (Emerson, Fretze & Shaw, 2011). For instance, staff meetings, informal staff room discussions, parent teacher meetings were documented.

Individual Reflection: Video Clips and Written Reflections The video clips played dual roles in this study. They functioned as a data source and as a tool in facilitating critical reflection activities (Brophy, 2004; Koc, Pecker & Osmoanoglu, 2009; Sherin & van Es, 2009). I

videoed teachers in five minutes slots during their lessons, twice a week. The teachers decided which lessons they wanted me to record. I sat at the back, in one of the students seats while recording. The teachers did not want to do their own recording as they thought it would distract their instruction. I informed teachers of when I would be observing and recording their classes, so they had enough time to prepare if desired. It is possible that the lessons I recorded were the best representation of their teaching. If these were the best cases, then extrapolating backwards, one could assume what typically happens in classes may vary in terms of the overall interactions and activities in class. While I can't argue that other lessons were very much different, I did notice that there was some preparation when they were being recorded. Each lesson that was recorded constituted three videos, typically taken during the first five minutes of the lesson, then 20 minutes into the lesson (mid-point) and the final 5 minutes of the lesson. Recording full lessons was not feasible because of the lack of battery power in recording devices as electricity was scarce. In total this study included 69 recordings.

At the end of every week teachers were given their recordings in thumb-drives. During weekends, the teachers analyzed their own videos and reflected on their own practices without a guided protocol. Due to the tendency for teachers to focus on and describe technical aspects of teaching focused on students (deficits) in their initial reflections, in subsequent reflection activities I intentionally sought to shift their attention toward themselves, their teaching activities and their interactions with students (Davis, 2006; Rosaen, Lunderberg, Cooper, Fritzen & Terstra, 2008). Teachers submitted the video clips and their reflections to me the following Monday morning of every week. I reviewed the clips and written reflections in preparation for teacher focus groups. Furthermore, I showed these videos to the students who participated in the focus groups, and closely reviewed their comments and concerns in preparation for reflection

interviews with them. Because the teachers engaged with their data before I accessed them, it was hoped that my influence on their initial reflections was minimized to some extent. I did not write reflections for the video's I reviewed. Instead, I wrote detailed notes on each of the class observations I did in which the videos were recorded, adding a section in which I reflected on critical events and issues of equity and inclusion. I used these notes when I conducted the video analysis interviews instead of making it redundant by writing another reflection. Teachers often requested that I provide rigid guidelines in terms of what they were to reflect on when viewing their video recordings. The purpose of engaging in reflections was to ensure that teachers share their own understandings, minimizing imposing my own views. Therefore, I provided minimal instructions and encouraged teachers to share what they thought was important in what they observed about their own teaching. I incorporated some of my own observations during the interviews, cautiously aware that teachers might view by observations as evaluative rather than reflective.

The written reflections based on these video clips served as an important data collection tool facilitating reflection-on-action, documenting diachronic dimensions of their teaching activities (Gutiérrez, 2016; Gutierrez & Stone, 1997; Parikh, Janson & Singleton, 2012; Schön, 1982). Written reflections created opportunities for teachers to reflect deeply on their activities, articulate what they noticed and provided interpretations of their teaching activities (Sherin & van Es, 2009). Furthermore, creating opportunities for teachers to reflect individually allowed them to articulate thoughts that they were not be comfortable sharing during the collective reflection activity (LeCompte, Preissele & Tesch, 1993). While video reflections have shown to improve teaching practices (Corwin, Price & Storeygard,1996; Knight et al., 2012), in this study the focus was to create opportunities for teachers to reflect upon themselves and the ways in

which they engaged in teaching activities (Schieble, Vetter & Meacham, 2015; Sherin & van Es, 2009). How teachers chose to transform their teaching activities toward advancing equity and inclusion was left entirely up to them. However, it was evident that teachers incorporated student feedback and my own observations when formulating the nature of change they envisioned in their teaching activities.

Critical Reflection Activity: Individual Interviews Critical reflection activities took place during individual interviews with teachers. Each teacher participated in two individual reflection activities during the study. These reflection interviews were the primary tools through which teachers focused on their teaching activities (Flores & Alonso, 1995; Gibbs, 2007). In facilitating this activity, I incorporated multiple data sources such as selected video clips, sections from written reflections, journey maps and data from student focus groups (see Appendix D). These data sources were presented to the teachers as a means of prompting meaningful discussion of the ways in which they understood themselves and their own practices (Kruger & Casey, 2015). For example, during the critical reflection activities, the teachers and I viewed segments of the videos and used their explanations and my own observation notes to guide our conversations.

Conversations between teachers and myself became deeper and more meaningful as the study progressed. These interactions shifted in multiple ways (explained extensively in chapter 6). For example, teachers became defensive when I pointed out inequitable and exclusionary aspects of their teaching activities, based on the experiences students shared with me. Teachers often dismissed student points of view. These interactions were used as fodder to encourage teachers to share their own meaning-making processes in detail, clarifying the ways in which their activities were shaped by sociocultural, historical affordances and constrains they

negotiated in the capillaries of their day-to-day activities. For example, teachers were convinced that students that belonged to low-caste areas were socialized in ways that were not conducive to school expectations. I explained to teachers how these entrenched ideologies shaped their disciplinary activities by sharing student experiences. In early conversations teachers insisted the caste-based discrimination was not common. However, when teachers were asked to examine they ways in which their views on student backgrounds (a proxy for caste) was used to justify harsh punishment, teachers began to recognize the prevalence of caste-based discrimination. Interestingly, teachers in this study distanced themselves from such practices, but pointed out the ways in which 'other' teachers engaged in these problematic practices.

Institutional Scripts Critical institutional ethnographies pay close attention to the ways in which formal and informal scripts mediate institutional practices (Campbell & Gregor, 2004). Some of these scripts are akin to what Guba and Linclon (1989) called "records." which they distinguish from textual artifacts and documents. These records are created to attest to, document, or evaluate an official act, product, or policy (e.g., teacher record books, official memo's, circulars, syllabi, student products and curricular materials such as assessments and lesson plans), whereas they call all other textual artifacts" documents." These scripts included written texts such as teacher record books, official memo's, circulars, syllabi, student products and curricular materials such as assessments and lesson plans. They also included official and informal meetings and discussions that took place within the school system. Guided by teacher interviews and observations, these scripts served as secondary data sources. They were incorporated into interviews, focus groups and reflections selectively enabling examining institutional affordances and constraints that shaped the ways teachers engaged in teaching activities.

For example, teachers shared how the curriculum that they were asked to follow constrained their ability to engage in meaningful teaching activities. The teachers guide which is a printed curriculum guide insisted that teachers engage in activity-based teaching instead of direct instruction. Teachers found that activity-based teaching was not useful for students specially in terms of preparing students for high-stakes examinations. During our interviews, I read and showed excerpts from the teachers guide, asking teachers to expand upon the ways these instructions impeded students' ability to learn in meaningful ways. Similarly, teachers shared official circulars that insisted that teachers increase high-stakes examination attainment rates, describing how official documents such as circulars take precedence over the teachers guide. Teachers interpreted the official circular, as justification for not following the teachers' guide and instead engaging in teaching activities that were geared toward teaching to the test.

Data Analysis

Translations and Transcriptions All interviews and focus groups were audio recorded (Erickson, 2006; Tochon, 2007). All interviews and focus groups were conducted in Tamil and then transcribed and translated into English. As the sole researcher and translator, I hoped to circumvent interpretation issues faced when using third party translators (Temple & Young, 2004). Throughout the study, sample transcripts were shared with Native Tamil speakers. We conducted multiple forward and backward translations in ensuring the accuracy of the translations. For example, I shared one fourth of four of my Tamil transcripts with my colleagues three times during the study. During forward translating, we translated these transcripts simultaneously and discussed convergences and divergences in our translations. There was very little mismatch between word choices. In one of the sample transcripts the three of us showed 93% match on words. The words that did not match were often a result of dialect. For example,

the phrase ‘he said’ (avar sonnar) in Tamil as multiple references. At times it refers to a male saying something, a gender-neutral collective, or to one’s husband. I translated ‘avar sonnar’ as always, a male speaking, while both colleagues used it as a gender-neutral collective. In these instances, we went back to the original text and traced its origin and adjusted our translations accordingly. Similarly, the word ‘kiraval road’ which students used often were unfamiliar to the three of us. Upon further discussion we recognized that this was actually the Tamilized version of the English word gravel road. The students shared this word metaphorically, as their teachers did alluding to the fact that their educational paths are less than ideal.

Two colleagues, both Native Tamil speakers helped me with the backward translation process. They reviewed two sample transcripts that I had translated from Tamil to English. Then they picked one fourth of each transcript and translated it back into Tamil. We did this process twice during the study. After discussing some of the main concerns they had I went through all three English transcripts line by line. One of their main concerns was that I used the English words students used even when the meanings didn't translate exactly. Example the word Copy (sounds like Koppi), means text book and I left the word as is ‘copy’ which they noted made little sense to a non-native Tamil speaker. Similarly, at times my colleagues omitted words such as ‘So’ and ‘the thing is’. They found that these words were redundant because the text made sense without them. However, because these words highlighted important discursive shifts such as reasoning, deflection and defensiveness, all of which needed to be interpreted and I chose to use them in the transcripts I used during the analysis.

Coding The initial analysis was inductive. Here codes, categories and themes were derived directly as they emerge from data (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Saldana, 2016). The initial phase of coding followed tenets of the grounded theory approach, which sought to reveal

the conditions in which activities took place and the ways in which research participants navigated these conditions (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Subsequent phases of the coding cycle consisted of both inductive and deductive processes. This included matching codes and units within those codes into segments of the transcripts, using a constant comparative analysis process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Taylor & Bogodan, 2015). Key thoughts, words and phrases from the transcripts are used to label each idea that emerges. A code book containing code descriptions and definitions of themes is developed based on this inductive phase of the data analysis process (Boyatzis, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Coding data comprises four distinct iterative processes. First, all the interviews were read per teacher. I engaged in general/open coding, looking for emergent codes, categories and themes (Creswell, 2013; Saldana, 2016; Strause & Corbin, 1998). At the micro-level, the coding processes were open, axial and selective. They consisted of dividing data into discrete parts, closely examining and comparing similarities and differences. This resulted in developing more provisional codes or including them within existing codes and themes (Rodwell, 1998). For instance, all the interviews and focus groups conducted with Revathi, were read and emerging themes were tabulated in an excel file. I made ongoing comments on the transcripts using the comment function. Simultaneously, I wrote in-depth research (journal) notes which included emergent ideas, questions, concerns, clarifications and possible citations of work that could be useful in interpreting what teachers said (Taylor & Bogdan, 2015; Maxwell, 2012).

Once all teacher interviews and focus groups were read, per teacher, I finalized the tabulated excel file. The second round of coding constituted reading the corpus of data by interview type across teachers. The same process used in the first round of coding was followed. At the end of the first two rounds, the two tabulated excel files were merged into matrix form where

convergences and divergences in emerging ideas were clearly indicated.

The third round of coding included uploading all the transcripts into NVivo, a qualitative software program (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). Once all the transcripts were uploaded I set up the provisional codes and sub-codes developed in the excel matrix by converting them into Nvivo nodes. Each node had a title and a definition of what the node contained, akin to the process of bucketing (Saldana, 2016). After half of the teacher interviews and focus groups (12 out of the 23) were coded in N-Vivo, I shared my codes and coding process with three of my committee members. I presented the codes, their definitions and the ways in which I organized relationships between codes. In this meeting, I was given feedback that helped me revise the codes. For example, during the discussions it became evident that the codes I had developed were static and served as place holders in ways that might make the analysis process arduous. Based on this feedback, I revised and reorganized the codes in ways that highlighted important relationships that emerged in the corpus of data. For instance, one of my early codes which was labeled 'ability tracking', was revised as 'ability tracking and its relationship to teaching activities.' In making this change I was able to capture the processes that mediated ability tracking better. Once the revised codes were finalized they were developed into a code book which included code labels, distinct definitions and example quotes. The final coding process consisted of recoding all 23 teacher interviews and focus groups based on the finalized codes.

Analysis NVivo, a qualitative software is used throughout the analysis process (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). Once all the teacher interviews and focus groups were coded, the first round of analysis constituted running multiple queries made available through NVivo matrix coding tools. In identifying relationships based on the codes, emergent themes were developed by examining query results. For instance, I ran a query to determine the ways in which teaching

practices differed based on ability-tracked groups (see Figure 2). The query revealed that there was a significant overlap between teaching activities and its relationship to student learning especially in the ways in teachers addressed the needs of struggling learners. Upon examining this relationship further, it was evident that teacher assumptions about students' ability or the lack thereof shaped their teaching practices. For example, teacher refrained from teaching content they thought would be too difficult for students in low-ability tracked groups to comprehend.

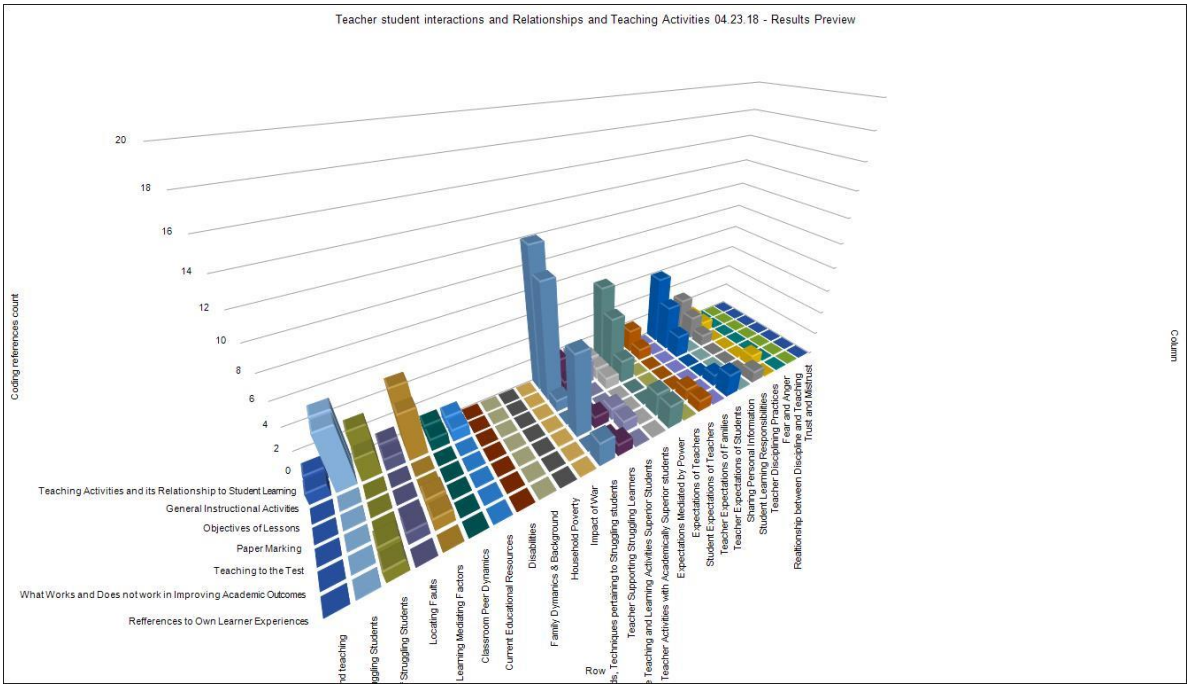

Figure 2: NVivo Query

Once key queries that indicated important relationships in the corpus of data was conducted, each query was developed into a theme. In-depth analytic memos were written describing emerging themes and possible relationships throughout the interview and analysis process (Saldana, 2016). Analytic memos were guided by a set of questions that helped organize themes and their important aspects (see Figure 3).

- What General Ideas are the participant(s) talking about?
- What is the Tone of the Ideas?
- What use is this information? What does it mean?
- What does it tell me that stands out?
- What is this about? (Not just substance but the Underlying Meaning)

Figure 3: Analytic Memo Questions

Each analytic memo had an introduction section that explained the purpose of the memo and the key features of the theme. It also included a theoretical section that guided the interpretation of the quotes included in the memo. Additionally, the analytic memos incorporated information from field notes, citations from extent literature, and excerpts from original transcripts and images. Analytic memos were instrumental in raising codes and themes to conceptual levels (Charmaz, 2004; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Maxwell, 2012).

Data analysis was ongoing and iterative, incorporating both inductive and deductive processes (Erickson, 2006; Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009). The analysis included iterative processes of reading across multiple sources and source codes in identifying broader themes (Erickson, 2006). Each analytic memo was discussed with my dissertation chair in detail where we discussed theoretical orientations, nuances in teacher quotes and important ideas that needed to be highlighted in each memo. These analytic memo's incorporated units within and between the data sources using domain analysis. This involved grouping codes and themes, establishing relationships and linkages between domains, making speculative inferences, seeking disconfirming evidence and summarizing findings in ways that build theory (Cohen, Manion & Morrsion, 2007).

Trustworthiness

In aiming to represent participant's perspectives and experiences as accurately as

possible, I recognized my own influence as a researcher in shaping their perspectives and experiences (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Pugach & Richardson, 2005). For example, I explicitly discussed my professional influences along with my other social locations such ethnicity, class, and caste. I shared my interpretations of data and invited teachers to clarify and/or disagree with my points of view. All these interactions were carefully documented. I prioritized transparency, where I used my time with teachers and students to share my fears, discomforts, and the lessons I learned as a result of the study (hooks, 2014). I engaged in these activities ensuring reflexivity (Colbourne & Sque, 2004). Reflexive journals documented the ways in which my social locations as researcher influenced data collection and analysis (Dowling, 2006).

Most of the activities I undertook in relation to trustworthiness, was to ensure credibility (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). In ensuring the credibility of translations, forward and backward translations were conducted on sample data described above. These translations were conducted by native Tamil speakers from the North (Regmi, Naidoo, & Pilkington, 2010). Ongoing member checks, a technique to support claims of credibility were conducted intermittently throughout the study to ensure rigor (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 1989).

Member checks included confirming results with participants by discussing aspects of the audit trail, conducting peer briefings and discussing and clarifying negative cases (Creswell, 2013; Kvale, 1996). Member checks included discussions highlighting convergences and divergences in emergent findings throughout the study (Gee, 2001). Here, teachers and students were involved in discussing emergent findings, and were given ample opportunities to clarify or reject inconsistent and contradictory interpretations (Moran-Ellis et al., 2006). For example, three weeks after the completion of the study I conducted three focus groups with the four focal teachers and two focus groups with the students that served as member checks (Brantlinger,

Jimenez, Pugach & Richardson, 2005). During these focus groups, teachers were presented with vignettes that constituted some of the key ideas that emerged from the interviews. For instance, one of the vignettes discussed the ways in which ability-tracking processes worked in the school. Teachers read these during the member checking focus groups and engaged in clarifying, agreeing and or disagreeing with the interpretations contained in the vignettes which were representative of the information collected during the study.

Member-checking processes followed Guba and Lincoln's (1989) views that stated "member-checking processes ought to be dedicated to verifying that the *constructions* collected are those that have been offered by respondents" (p.241), as distinctly different from triangulation. Member-checks were ongoing during the data collection phase of this study. Based on teacher conversations, I revised the ways in which I interpreted facts in relation to ability-tracking. Initially, I assumed that tracking students were based on examination grades. While teachers agreed with this assumption, they later revealed that grades are not the only criterium. The explained how some of the students in the highest-ability tracked class were placed in them because of their parents' occupation. For example, if a student was a son or daughter of a principal or teacher in another school, they were placed in the 'best division' with little regard for their academic standing.

Similarly, I revised my interpretations based on teacher explanations. In preparation for initial classroom observations, I read teacher record books carefully. These record books documented the activities teachers conducted during each lesson. I noticed that these records were precise, had little revisions and used the exact terminology used in the teacher's guide. I believed reading record books would help me focus my attention to specific activities (i.e., group activities). During my initial observations, I noticed that teachers used a different set of activities

than described in their records. Teachers explained that the records were maintained to appease education authorities and had little to do with their actual teaching activities. This reconstruction helped me understand classroom activities in important ways as I recorded classroom observations. All data sources were accessible to all participants in the study at all times, except the teachers had no direct access to student data, an intentional choice I made to protect students. These data sources were used as points of discussion, propelling the collection of more data. Teachers in this study were involved in the interpretation of data through reflections, discussions providing additional triangulation (Flick, 2004).

Multiple data sources in this study were used to establish trustworthiness through triangulation (Lather, 2003). Triangulation in this study follows what Guba and Lincoln (1989) described as "triangulation should be thought of as cross-checking specific data items of a factual nature" (p. 241), such as number of teachers and students. For example, the in service-advisor in charge of the school site pointed out that there were 74 teachers in total. She noted that about half of them were graduates. I looked through teacher records made available to me by the school principal and found that there were 74 teachers but only about one third of them had bachelor's degrees. Similarly, teachers could not provide the exact number of students in their classes as attendance rates fluctuated throughout the year. I verified student numbers based on attendance registers and accounted for students who had not attended school at all during the study although records did not indicate that they had dropped-out.

Data was simultaneously analyzed across all sources, looking for both confirming and disconfirming evidence (Erickson, 2006; LeCompte, Preissle & Tesch, 1993). Teacher and student participants often contradicted one another in how they interpreted their own activities in relation to others. It is important to note that these contradictions did not compromise the value

of what participants shared, resisting positivistic notions of cross-checking for ‘truth’. Rather disconfirming evidence was important in elucidating the complexities of phenomena being examined. For example, some teachers noted that most teachers support students in low-ability tracked groups in improving their attainment, while others pointed out that often other teachers do attend low-ability classes. The complexities of these realities were revealed when students pointed out that some teachers did not come to their classes, while other teachers ensured that students were taught during allocated times and even provided additional support outside of the classroom, for example by conducting extra classes before school began.

All documentation pertaining to the study is organized in ways that warrant orderliness (Wood & Kroger, 2000). They involved clear descriptions of how data were collected, documented, stored, and analyzed. All data sources were clearly labeled, indexing dates, the data source, and the participant. These data sources were organized in folders and subfolders in ways that they could be located easily. The label assigned to each data source was used consistently during data analysis processes described above. As a final check on credibility periodic debriefings with academic advisors and committee members were conducted throughout the duration of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For example, I met with Elizabeth once every two weeks via Zoom during data collection. Elizabeth and I discussed the ways in which data collection processes could be made more efficient recognizing how the security situation was deteriorating rapidly during my field work. We deliberated on possible alternatives in relation to ensuring my own safety while not compromising on the quality of data I was collecting. I also discussed concerns and constrains with Kala during data collection. As a result, I was able to organize my thoughts in relation to what I was experiences during data collection. For instance, Kala and I discussed the importance of not trying to ‘fix’ problematic practices. Instead, we

discussed ways in which to use these distressing experiences to encourage teachers to share their own understandings, in line with the purpose of this study.

Researcher Positionality

Drawing from Erickson's (2006) conceptualization of studying side by side, in this study I maintained a working partnership with the teachers. This partnership prioritized building dialogic consciousness. Building dialogic consciousness-raising relationships necessitated that I pay close attention to the ways in which I positioned myself as a researcher. The ways in which I positioned myself determined my ability to become a worthy witness of their lived realities (Paris & Winn, 2014). Furthermore, my commitment to decolonizing knowledges through research required that I engaged with research cautiously, considering its troubled history in studying oppressed groups (Smith, 2012; Paris, 2012). Research which fails to recognize the researchers positionality (and their epistemological commitments), resulted in perpetuating research conclusions that harm marginalized communities (Ladson-Billings, 2012). My dissertation like these studies had the potential to position the participants in this study in ways that were detrimental to their well-being. I kept a close check on my positionality throughout the study by writing reflection journals and discussing the nature of my relationships with my participants with my committee members.

In committing to these values, I undertook multiple activities throughout the study. I involved teachers in the compilation and interpretation of data. As discussed before, teachers were given chances to engage with the data and participate in interpreting. Teachers were given opportunities to interact with data before sharing them with me. For instance, teachers reviewed their video clips and reflected upon the prompts before data was shared with me. Furthermore, teachers decided on the video clips they wished to reflect on and prioritize what aspects they

wanted to focus on during discussions.

An important aspect of building dialogically conscious relationships was predicated upon recognizing our differential social locations as researcher and teachers. I was ever mindful that although we shared similarities such as belonging to the ethnic Tamil minority (I am of mixed ethnicity my Father ethnic Tamil, a minority and my Mother is ethnic Sinhalese the majority ethnicity), most of my identity markers privileged me in numerous ways. Being a Ph.D. candidate in a U.S. university, resulted in teachers elevating my educational status above their own. Furthermore, my class, language and caste status privileged me in ways that ensures access to material and intellectual resources from which they have been systemically and systematically barred. For example, I am fluent in Sinhala (majority language), Tamil (minority language) and English. One of the privileges I had in relation to my participants was my that I was tri-lingual, fluent in Sinhala, Tamil, and English.

My fluency in the dominant language Sinhala, allowed me to travel within the country without being surveilled or detained. They also created multiple avenues for me to interact with politicians and higher administrative officials without suspicion. The participants in this study were mono-lingual and were surveilled by Sinhala speaking military officials. As such, participants stayed within the confines of the Northern province where Tamil was spoken and were extremely hesitant to travel to other parts of the Island. While teachers admired my fluency in three languages, they realized that I could easily share their information with the Military. I had to be extremely transparent about the ways in which I communicated with military officials during my stay. Military personnel would often talk to me in Sinhala in the presence of students and teachers who did not understand the language. During these times, I would pause translate what the military personnel shared with the teachers and students and, translate my responses.

Fortunately, these conversations were a-political and limited to discussing the weather, the purpose of my study and day-to-day events such road closures or bus strikes.

During the study, I became acutely aware of the ways in which my experiences of war were significantly different and less threatening in relation to what teachers and students had experienced. Throughout the thirty-year civil war in the country I lived and grew up in Colombo which saw very little of the atrocities of war. As such, my education was not interrupted as profoundly as those lived through war-time atrocities. My uninterrupted progression toward higher education was further bolstered by attending a prestigious private girl's school. The connections I made by attending an elite school advantaged me in terms of building important social networks and creating multiple opportunities to pursue higher education. These divergent experiences resulted in teachers having to educate me on some of the ways in which their lives were indelibly marked by their war-time experiences. It was important for me to recognize that I could not relate to these experiences. This reality allowed me to re-position myself as a learner as opposed to a sympathizer or empathizer. As a result, teachers were able to share their experiences and curate what they shared with me, making the process of building trust a shared endeavor between myself and teachers.

My relationship with the teachers in this study were further mediated by my professional status. Toward the end of the war, I worked in this community as a psychologist and a teacher trainer. My work consisted of working with teachers and students through government and non-government sponsored psycho-social programs. My professional status positioned me as an expert in the field of education. I had to negotiate between my previous professional status and current work as a researcher. For example, teachers solicited expert advice in solving learning and teaching issues, instead of viewing me as a researcher working toward understanding their

views. I talked to teachers explicitly about my current role, while using these opportunities to re-direct questions and engage in collective understandings on factors that mediated learning and teaching.

In considering our social locations that I paid close attention to the ways in which I interacted with teachers. Based on my previous experiences in working in similar school settings, my interactions with teachers were mediated by sociocultural considerations such as caste. In the past, teachers paid remarkable attention in maintaining appropriate caste boundaries. For example, in teacher training workshops teachers from higher castes would join me at the lunch table. They would advise me of the importance in respecting caste boundaries, often educating me about what is acceptable and not acceptable for high caste women such as myself. I talked to teachers about these cultural mores, both formally and informally. In doing so I recognized that transgressing these boundaries required certain compromises. For example, I followed cultural codes already set up, such as staff room seating arrangements, where I had a seat at the head table. On the other hand, requested that practices where teachers and students rise up as a mark of respect (when I pass by or enter a class) be stopped as it disrupted classroom activities. I explained how these activities severely limited my movements within the school, negatively impacting my research work.

I exercised caution in the ways I interpreted teacher experiences. This required that I constantly interrogate power and privilege as well as recognize and be responsive to the reality of power disparities within the school. Daily reflections were incorporated into sections of my journal entries and field work notes. I reflected upon key interactions and events that took place during the day and discussed how my privileged locations influenced them. For example, teachers who were not a part of the study often requested that I observe their classes and interact

with them as frequently I did with my focal teachers. They claimed they too wanted to learn from my expertise. I negotiated these interactions by explaining my study to them and how I was interested in understanding how teachers thought about these practices instead of sharing my expertise. Furthermore, I discussed some of my own vulnerabilities and discomforts with teachers and created opportunities for teachers to help me understand ways in which to interpret my own challenges (hooks, 2014). I often struggled with the ways in which to gauge the volatile security situation surrounding the school. I was not accustomed to recognizing how the absence of many students from one area was interpreted as a security concern. Rather, I wondered if students were not interested in participating in focus groups. Teachers and students helped me understand how to understand these patterns. Overtime, teachers became comfortable in sharing their experiences and discussing their interpretations during both formal and informal interactions.

Interpreting teacher experiences in ways that did justice to their realties came with the understanding that I may not be given access to some parts of their lived realities. This access was denied due to our differing locations and the hostile socio-political contexts they navigate (Bogdan & Bilken, 1992). For instance, some of the teachers in my study had strong personal and professional relationships with the former rebel group. They refrained from talking about specifics in relation to their experiences during the previous regime. These understandings were important as they helped me determine which question responses to pursue further and which ones to let go. This decision was intentional as I recognized that any documentation of this former relationship would put the teachers at risk for detainment and arrests, due to heavy military surveillance in this area (Somasundaram, 2014).

Maintaining objectivity and neutrality was not possible in this study. This study was

predicated upon advancing values of equity and inclusivity. As such, this study was openly political (Slee, 2011). I exercised caution in the ways in which I shared and withheld my own political viewpoints. My decisions were carefully documented and justified in terms of building rapport and trust (De Laine, 2000; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). I kept a detailed record of the decisions I made in my journal. I detailed the circumstances in which I shared my political views, and how these interactions influenced trust and rapport with the teachers. Finally, my role as a researcher shifted constantly during the course of this study. I had to take up different roles outside my researcher role. These shifts were negotiated based on the relationships I developed with teachers and students within the school system (Walford, 2001). For example, the field work in this study was influenced by my training as a teacher and psychologist. These professional locations created opportunities for schools to access resources from the central education department. These locations positioned me as someone who could channel important resources (i.e., textbooks, Public transportation, and teachers) into the school system. My ongoing relationship with educational authorities resulted in having to participate in administrative meetings where I was consulted in determining solutions to on-going problems within the school. Similarly, I was asked to "counsel" students constantly, especially those whom teachers felt engaged in disruptive behaviors. I viewed my researcher positionality as an ongoing, negotiated process rather than a fixed location. As such, I documented my experiences, and discussed them with my participants and mentors throughout this study.

Conclusion

In war-affected school contexts teaching practices perpetuating, maintaining, and legitimating inequity and exclusion are well documented (Haines, 2014; Seymore, 2014). This study examined the ways in which teachers understood themselves and their teaching practices in

relation to such injustices. The methodologies utilized drew heavily on critical institutional ethnography and participatory action research and utilized multiple data sources and analyses to answer the research questions that framed this study. Together they created opportunities for teachers to engage in critical reflection activities. Through these opportunities teachers examined their subjectivities and their teaching activities. These methodologies closely aligned with the conceptual framework of this study reiterating this study's commitment to critical scholarship.

Chapter 4

Disposability and Disjunctures: Factors Mediating Teacher Activities

Disposability and disjunctures were two factors that mediated teacher activities. Disposability resulted in creating a class of students unworthy of being taught and retained in school. Disposability was maintained through multiple sociocultural, historical factors that contributed to its enduring legacy in schools. Disposability was enacted in teaching practices. I highlight the consequences of disposability: segregation, debilitation, and capacitation. In critical feminist sociological thought, disjunctures are irregularities that emerge when different versions of reality shape the experiences of all those participating in activity systems (Smith, 2006). Data revealed the ways in which disjunctures occurred and the consequences of teachers trying to negotiate disjunctures. This chapter includes data collected before teachers engaged in critical reflection activities and offer a glimpse of life in this school before the effects of the study began to emerge.

Theme One: Disposability

Teaching activities were animated by discourses of disposability. I borrow the concept of disposability from Giroux (2012) and Bauman (2012). Disposability explains how certain groups in any given community become earmarked for dispossession due to various intersectional

assemblages that include, but are not limited to nationality, class, race, gender, and sexuality. Disposability mediated student and teacher activities and was prominently featured in segregating, debilitating, and capacitating processes. Being deemed disposable resulted in triage decisions about what to do with excessive and unwanted bodies, consequently raising questions about what was to be done with these students (Erevelles & Minear, 2010). Triage decisions pertained to the re-ordering of material resources and intellectual capital that reified disposability within the school. I juxtapose the susceptibility of some students to disposability by contrasting them with students who were considered worthy of being retained and resourced. While teachers participated in these processes that often harmed students, they did not do so to intentionally. Rather, what teachers revealed foregrounded sociocultural and historically mediated power structures that shaped inequitable and exclusionary educational processes (Rogoff & Gutiérrez, 2003).

Constructing Disposability Teacher narratives were a commentary on the complex ways in which sociocultural, historical conditions shape their everyday decision making in communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Teachers described the ways in which students became constructed and confined to disposability based on their backgrounds and assumed deficits. Teachers described ‘student backgrounds’ as a means of explaining who their students were, and how they understood their students. Geopolitical caste constructions and unconventional family structures of students in featured significantly in these explanations.

Geopolitical caste constructions. Students lived in surrounding villages that were marked by geopolitical constructions of caste. Although it was taboo to discuss caste openly, caste-based ideologies shaped the ways in which these communities understood themselves and their activities in relation to others (Kuganathan, 2014). The seepage of caste constructions into

schools meant that caste-based ideologies became associated with ideologies of ability, capacity, talents, and even students' humanity. These constructs shaped teacher activities in school making disposability an imminent threat to students.

A conversation I had with a school administrator, Mrs. Nadarajah, demonstrates the pervasive nature of caste in this region of Sri Lanka. Mrs. Nadarajah often referred to students from low caste families as "dirty, unclean, and incorrigible." She also claimed that low-caste students "corrupted or polluted good students from respectable families with their bad habits". She concluded by saying that some students cannot be corrected because they are "from filthy backgrounds" (Field notes: October 12, 2017). Caste identities were historically linked to notions of pollution, which valorized purity high-caste groups. Segregation was deemed necessary as groups deemed 'dirty, unclean and incorrigible' were considered capable of polluting others making disposability imminent.

In describing how student backgrounds (a proxy for being from lower-castes) related to academic ability Revathi said,

> You know those [academically struggling] kids think of their areas in a proud way. Students want to be proud of where they are from. No matter in what trash area they live in, they don't want anyone to call it a garbage or filthy place isn't it?

Revathi noted that academically struggling learners come from 'trash' areas, making explicit how academic ability was associated with geopolitical spaces. She recognized that students resisted the pejorative ways they were positioned. However, she did not question her own assumptions about these areas being 'filthy' and what it said about those who inhabit these spaces. This left the underlying dichotomy between purity and pollution intact. Teachers

transferred that dichotomy to academic abilities, rendering students from ‘filthy’ areas susceptible to disposability. Revathi described how teacher assessments of students ’abilities, shaped by caste-ideologies made them susceptible to disposability. She said,

> Some teachers are only concerned about students’ educational abilities, like their academic performance. They don't care about the child’s life per se. They don’t think about the child as whole person you know. Some of the teachers think of students as very low beings. They spoil the good ones. Based on where they are from and who they are and things like that.

Revathi pointed out that teachers were ‘only concerned’ with ‘educational abilities’, and these abilities were closely linked to where students came from. This caused teachers not to ‘care about the child’s life per se’, meaning teachers did not regard some parts of the student’s lives. Teachers did not view students as ‘whole’ people but as ‘low beings.’ Dehumanization was evident in questioning students’ full humanity invoking discourses of ‘low-beings’ making students susceptible to disposability. Revathi made an important shift by distancing herself from ‘some’ teachers who engaged in what she considered problematic practices. By problematizing the practice and not its underlying assumptions, even teachers like Revathi who opposed discriminatory practices did not disrupt ideologies that made some students susceptible to disposability. Disposability was constructed by recognizing students as capable ‘spoiling’ others, underscoring the purity, pollution ideology.

***Family constructions*.** Teachers persistently labeled students’ families as defective which compounded students’ vulnerablity to disposability. Ravindran said, “It’s the area they are from that is the problem, and their family background only is the problem, nothing else, it’s where they are from, where they live that terrible environment. It's the background they are in

(are from)." Ravindran noted that the family backgrounds were connected to where they are from, implying caste ideologies. In addition to the 'terrible environment', he recognized that the impact of war was severe on these families which caused people to become 'bad' by engaging in 'wrong activities'. Ravindran went on, "because they lived in internment camps they became a certain problematic, a bad way. The students' contexts impact them negatively." Ravindran noted that, "from the time they were little they get involved in wrong activities, just like their family members." He did not mention what these wrong activities were but was convinced that these families were 'problematic' and the problems students face were 'because of these families', noting "students do wrong things in school, yes, for that their family is the reason. students have lots of problems because of these families." Ravindran assumed students 'do wrong things in school' because their families have socialized them in the wrong ways. When certain groups are deemed as showing high proclivities toward engaging in 'wrong things' and being a 'bad way', then they are bad people doing wrong things. These demarcations made some students susceptible to disposability.

Through teacher conversations it was evident that one of the 'wrong things' families engaged in was violating traditional family structures. The ideal family construction was to stay in one place, marry within the family's caste and means, raise the family, and ensure that values, beliefs, and practices transfer between generations to ensure the continuation of their dignified society. Bhavani pointed out how student families did not fit the ideal family constructions,

> If you inquire from these students [in low-ability tracked groups] you will see, for most of them their parents are separated, or if not, the father or mother has left the home or re-married, there would be some problem like that [in the student's family]. I think because these parents must leave this area to find jobs. then you

know that's when these family problems start.

Being separated, re-married or leaving partners were viewed as examples of defective family structures. She noted that these realities were related to the economic constraints, which meant that men and women alike had to leave their communities to find wage-paying jobs. This reduced social pressure to conform to norms. Reductions in social pressure to conform resulted in wide-spread cultural disruptions that included remarriage, divorce, extra-marital affairs and, inter-caste or race marriages. Bhavani connected these new family constructions as the starting point in which 'problems start.' When families were viewed in deficit ways made students who belonged to these families vulnerable to disposability.

Disposability emanated from the belief that family constructions were detrimental to students learning. Ravindran explained how unconventional families impacted students' academic work,

> These students are not interested in school, because people at home are not interested and they don't pay attention to their children, first of all, that's the issue. When they go home no one asks them about if lessons took place in school, or if the teachers taught. They don't pay attention to things like that. That's the problem

Ravindran noted the ways in which unconventional family structures impacted students' education. According to him, these families did not pay attention to their children. Their negligence was the primary reason as to why students did not show interest in their school work. Families were positioned as those who did not value education and did not engage in good parenting which required educational supervision. Teachers focused overwhelmingly on constructing unconventional families as problems which directly impacted how they positioned students and their experiences in school. The argument I make is not that students from

unconventional were not impacted by various family constructions. Rather, I highlight the valences toward viewing students' families negatively. Homogenizing students in problematic ways based on viewing their families as defective created a class of students who were susceptible to disposability.

Constructing Deficits Students became susceptible to disposability by teachers locating deficits in students. These deficits were located fluidly along a continuum of nature-nurture discourses, invoking assumptions of inherent and socialized traits. Locating deficits was visible at every level of the education system including those who advise teachers and administrators. In service advisors (ISAs) instruct and mentor teachers and administrators and wield significant administrative power over them. Brintha, the ISA in charge of the study site, told me the following which I copied verbatim from my fieldnotes:

> Brintha mentioned that this school has a lot of problems because of some students who are bad and damaged. She said, some of them are 'irreparable'. She used the word "terrible" to describe these students, and often started every sentence with "the problem with these children" (Field Notes: October 11, 2017).

Brintha pointed out this school had many problems because some students were 'damaged' and 'bad', locating the 'problems' (be it poor school performance or poor discipline) squarely on students. The intractable nature of these deficits can be inferred through her reference to students been seen 'irreparable.' Irreparability is an ideology that animates disposability, just as damaged goods are disposed of when they are irreparable (Giroux, 2012).

Teachers also took up the ideology of intractable deficits in ways that made their students vulnerable to disposability. Anojan shared how intractable deficits manifested in forms of cognitive impairments. Anojan said,

> I want to find out what the problem is with these children. The main problem is the children themselves, I know that. There is something radically wrong with some of them, like this one child, I wonder if there is a problem with his brain, like an upset brain you know, lost his mind like [a crazy person]?

Anojan saw students as the 'main problem.' He made sense of deficit as something amiss within students. Typically, mental impairments are viewed as a life-long conditions that render individuals useless in society. These views are particularly pervasive in post-war settings where discourses of PTSD render individuals as permanently impaired (Somasundaram, 2002). These problematic ways of understanding mental health issues made some students who did not fit into normative standards set by schools vulnerable to disposability.

Teachers viewed student temperaments as defective in relation to what was expected of them in school. Revathi said,

> But in the classes where the kids can't learn, you know those in the lower divisions. Well not that they will never understand at all, they can do the work, but the students don't care about their work, that's the thing, they have an odd mentality.

First, Revathi located the problem as inherent, pointing out that they 'can't learn'. Then she allowed more fluidity by noting that this condition was not permanent, and that prevailed because students 'don't care about their work'. She alluded to a defective temperament she called 'an odd mentality'. Defective temperaments were often spoken of as 'mentality', referring to problematic student tendencies. Ravindran echoed this idea, "sometimes it's their mentality, the student must care for their education somewhat… and so should the parents. This is the fundamental problem with these students' mentality." Bhavani seemed to concur, "the way I see

the problem with students is that, it maybe, it's their mentality." Student mentality, according to these teachers, was a 'fundamental problem'. They opined that this mentality caused students to disengage and have a nonchalant attitude toward school success. This mentality obstructed student's ability to perform well academically, making them susceptible to disposability.

Deficits teachers identified, transgressed normative constructions of what students should be doing in schools, and as such they were envisioned volitional. Ravindran said,

> If the child can get 50 marks for Tamil, that means there is no [cognitive]deficit in the child. But they are not motivated that is the problem, making them absolutely useless. They are of no use. This is absolutely the fault of those students. This is their fault. Because, if the child has come from grade 6 to 9 and then, up to grade 11 without knowing how to write, that means that the child did not try hard at all, not even a little.

Ravindran evaluated the nature of student deficits based on grades. According him, if students obtained 50 points for Tamil Language (signifying one's ability is to read and write) that meant there was 'no cognitive deficit in the child.' Having made this determination he noted that students who obtained 50 points for Tamil Language, and still under performed meant that their academic difficulties were 'absolutely the fault of those students' indicating students made choices sealing their own fate as 'useless.'

This view was widespread. Anojan said, "So, the rest of them they are all at the equal brain level. But, the lower performing students they are just playing the fool." In this comment, Anojan pointed out that all students had the same capacity or 'equal brain level' but those who did not perform well academically engaged in problematic practices that engendered poor performance. Being 'absolutely useless' due to volitional acts such as 'not trying hard' or 'playing the fool' made students susceptible to disposability, especially in contexts like schools

where productivity was the measure of human worth (Giroux, 2012). As such, uselessness brought on by volition was a key trope that rendered individuals as waste making them disposable (Bauman, 2004).

Interpreting Student Activities using Deficits-oriented frames The ways in which deficits were constructed caused teachers to interpret student activities in ways that increased students' susceptibility to disposability. In locating problems squarely within students as inherent or otherwise, teachers positioned themselves as sole arbiters in indexing problems and fixing them, as such wielded considerable leverage in determining who became susceptible to disposability.

One such interpretation, framed students as those who did not 'think' in the right ways. Bhavani said,

> Students don't try and help themselves. They haven't come to a point where they think like that. So, for example in my class if you inquire from then you will see that, I tell them constantly, that if you do your O/Level's and don't move on to A/Level's what are you going to do with your lives?

Bhavani was convinced that students did not think about their futures in progressive ways. She found it incomprehensible that students did not think about their futures and recognize the importance of education as a means of 'helping themselves'. She was annoyed at how her students responded to her reproach. She said,

> In response they say things like, my father is a driver I will join my father and go as his helper. That's what their opinion is, other than that they don't think 'what am I going to do if I don't study?' they don't have that kind of feeling.

She noted that her students lacked ambition because they wanted to pursue low-wage jobs like

their parents. The students Bhavani referred to were likely to fail the Ordinary Level examination, due to sociocultural, historical process within and outside school that made school success difficult (discussed later).

Despite these realities, Bhavani interpreted her student's activities as decisions they made in a vacuum, ignoring the conditions that shaped such decision making. This abstracted, deficit-oriented view ignored student circumstances interpreting student activities. Therefore, making student choices the sole determinants of their unfortunate predicaments was problematic. This absolved all other factors such as poverty and teaching activities from being factored in, making students vulnerable to disposability.

The ways in which deficits were constructed caused teachers to interpret their own activities in relation to these students as futile. Deficit views framed students as irreparable, making any investment otiose, increasing students' susceptibility to disposability. Ravindran said,

> There is nothing we can do to change these students and fix them at this point, when their parents themselves find that they cannot fix their children, and that they can do absolutely nothing for their child, then what can we do for them at most? Nothing.

Ravindran rationalized his view by noting that all the adults in these students' lives had tried to 'fix' children and failed. He continued, "we can't do anything they are beyond repair. There's nothing that can be done with that group [low-ability tracked group]. Nothing at all can be done for them, we have just let them go." Ravindran explained that students in low-ability tracked groups were 'beyond repair' that 'fixing' them was not possible. The word fixing assumed that something about these students was broken, while 'beyond repair' indicated that they were disposable. He couched this inevitability as teachers having no choice but to 'just let them go.'

Students, like irreparable products in consumer societies become disposed (Giroux, 2009b).

It is important to note that students were not ‘let go’ and made disposable in cavalier ways. Teachers gave up after trying to salvage these students from the throes of disposability. Anojan said, “sometimes despite us repeatedly telling them what they are doing is wrong, they just continue to do it”. He explained this was because “students don't even realize what they are doing is wrong, or some of them know what they are doing is wrong, but they keep on making the same mistake.” Then Anojan described how these circumstances engendered disposability, noting “so then we try to correct them for a while, and then we have no choice but to let them go. Anojan interpreted student activities as resistant to repair, because despite trying to ‘correct’ students were unresponsive. Once students were believed to be beyond help it was easier for students to become disposable.

Ravindran pointed out that disposability could be viewed as a prudent choice. He said,

> The truth is, there’s nothing that can be done with that group. Nothing at all can be done for them anymore. These students will fail the exam for sure. We can’t be wasting time with these ones isn’t it? Then we will lose out in paying attention to the good ones. We can support the good ones better with our time.

Ravindran predicted these students will fail the examination, thus investing teacher activities on these students was considered a waste of time. He argued that it is prudent to pay ‘attention to the good ones.’ Once teachers decided that investing in these students was not a good use of resources, it made their disposability imminent.

Teachers were aware the consequences of disposability. Ravindran predicted,

> They [low-performers] just must go home directly [drop-out], there is no other option. If it's a girl, families might keep them home for a few days, and then they’ll get rid of them,

married off to someone. The boys will roam around in the streets, creating problems in society just being useless in every way.

Being disposed by school led to trajectories that made them further disposable (i.e., married and sent off) and aberrant (i.e., creating problems in society), making these students 'useless in every way.' While teachers recognized the fate of these children due to being 'let go' (disposable), they rarely recognized the ways in which activities in schools pushed students toward disposability. Given the centrality I place on the construction of disposability, the argument I make is not that students didn't have significant learning related difficulties. Nor am I arguing that teachers purposely acted perniciously toward these students. Rather, I aimed to show how socio-cultural constructions (i.e., caste, ability) created over-determined impulses toward disposability, and constrained opportunities that could have created access and participation for an entire class of students.

Constructing not-to-non-disposable (N-disposable) Any analysis of disposability must be juxtaposed with a group of students who were viewed as indisposable. I use the term N-disposables, as a discursive move to show those who were positioned in opposition to those rendered disposable. These students were located fluidly on a continuum of not-to non-disposable. On one hand, students were non-disposable because of their intersectional positioning of privilege. Most of the students in the N-disposable group were children of relatively financially well-off families, from well-regarded areas, and families who had high status in the community because of their professions. Non-disposability means that their privilege protected them from disposability. The not-disposable indicates intentional decision-making that protected students from disposability, by recognizing some students as intellectually superior. This protection was in place even if they were not protected by their other privilege

positions. In other words, inherent academic ability and superior performance protected some students from disposability. Most of the students who navigated the N-disposable continuum had both types of protection. But I exposed the fluidity to demonstrate the ways in which these protections are precarious and therefore, volatile (Puar, 2017). For instance, students might become financially vulnerable, or they might fail an examination or two, and could make them susceptible to disposability.

Constructing Positive Attributes Students who were N-disposable possessed positive characteristics that secured their N-disposable status. These students were viewed as those possessing inherent abilities. Ravindran said,

> The ones who do well in Math and Science are the capable ones, they have higher abilities. The ones who have that kind of ability, enough to do well in Math and Science, they are the ones who will be able to do well in History and all the other subjects.

These students possessed inherent abilities that made them successful, establishing their worthiness. These attributes securely located students in the not-disposable end of the continuum. Teachers deciphered superior abilities based on student activities. Ravindran continued,

> Now also there is a child in the Ordinary Level class, If I look at her paper [all her answers are correct so. I have many students like that in the top division. She is like that in every class, everything she does is top quality she has it [ability] in her.

Ravindran described this student's superior academic performance. She got all the answers correct, indexing high aptitude. Performing well 'in every class', confirmed that this ability was inherent, affording students the privilege of being non-disposable.

Aligning closely with normative expectations in schools was another way in which teachers

constructed N-disposable groups. Anojan said,

> They don't miss school, you know the good ones. So, like I said if you take the students who got 9A's for the Ordinary Level exam, if you watch them, you will see they will be students that never missed school at all, their attendance will be perfect.

Students considered 'the good ones' attended school regularly despite overall attendance declining with the progression of grades. The N-disposable students were positioned as ideal students as they matched normative conceptions of what students should be doing, such as attending school. In turn, attendance was related to meeting the normative standard of good academic performance. Ravindran explained, "these good students are motivated. They come to school, and so they get everything correct. They are very smart, you must see how they study and answer exam papers, it's really good".

Three attributes were added to their description, motivation, goodness, and smartness, all of which was deemed lacking in students seen as disposable. Relatedly teachers noted that these 'good' students did their part, Bhavani said, "these students concentrated more and listened more carefully. For sure, they would have been paying attention and answering questions in class. They would have concentrated more, they would have gone home and looked at the lessons again". Bhavani explained how following normative standards of school participation ensured their success, securing their N-disposable status.

Following normative standards protected students because they made teacher activities stable. Revathi said,

> The ones who do well in class don't disrupt the class. They are interested on their work, so they work on their own. I don't have to make sure that they stay on task, I just teach, they just do well.

Students doing their part meant that Revathi can ‘just teach’ fulfilling her primary obligation of ‘just’ teaching, while students reciprocated by doing well. Bhavani shared how teacher returns on investing in these students was fruitful. She claimed, “when I do activities with them, no matter what I do, there is always a positive outcome, I believe that whatever I do in this class will have a successful outcome.” Unlike the students in the disposable group, Bhavani found that her efforts would not be in vain. Teachers were certain that their labor on behalf of these students would engender favorable outcomes protecting their N-disposable status.

Families of these students were viewed favorably as well. Ravindran noted, “these students’ parents are also interested in their children. Parents of the students in the best divisions come for parent teacher meetings. They prioritized their children.” Unlike the families of students who are disposable, these families showed a very different set of characteristics such as taking an interest in their children and participating in normative school practices like parent meetings. It was not only family support that located students in the N-disposable continuum but their privileged positions in society. Bhavani said,

> Students in grade ten C [high-ability tracked class] and all, these students there are children of important people like principals and teachers. Most of these parents are from good places, have regular office jobs, so they make sure that their children come to a good place in life just like them.

It was obvious that students in the top ability-tracked divisions were non-disposable due to privileges afforded by income, living in high-status areas, and holding respectable jobs. These conditions made teachers assume that students were socialized in ways that contributed to their success. Not only did these families support students, they were also ‘important people’ two protections that ensured that children from these families were placed in the N-disposable

continuum. Ravindran described how students from these families engaged in academic activities. He noted, “these students study one subject two to three times over again, because in their homes they are given priority. Parents only expect their children to study when they come home, nothing else”. Ravindran explained that because these parents prioritized academic activities, they created the necessary contexts that allowed students to engage in learning
The processes of constructing disposability and N-disposability entailed complex assemblages that included sociocultural historical factors and ideologies. In the next section, I give concrete examples of how the enactment of disposability was enabled, perpetuated, and maintained.

Order-Building: Ability-Tracking Order-building technologies enable the enactment of disposability schools. Bauman (2004) introduced the idea of order-building as a feature of modernity which made disposability inevitable. Order-building a vestige of modernity allowed tasks, roles, and outcomes to be reproduced in multiple colonized settings, as a means of getting rid of groups that were deemed unfit, unworthy, and useless (Bauman, 2012). Similarly, order-building in schools displaced and dispossessed students by rendering them out of place, unfit or undesirable specially through segregation, debilitation, and capacitation. To exemplify these enactments, I focus on the order-building processes of ability-tracking. Ability-tracking was important in two ways. First it illustrated how exclusionary practices were justified in schools. Secondly, it highlighted the ways in which processes of segregating, debilitating and capacitating took place when students were positioned as disposable, pushing them further down the abyss of disposability.

Segregation. Students earmarked for disposability were conspicuously found in low-ability tracked groups. Ability-tracking was rationalized by pointing out struggles teachers faced in teaching mixed ability groups. Anojan explained,

> Teachers decided, it was better to separate students according to their abilities. [They said] that the greater challenge is in explaining lessons to the students in the lower levels who are in these mixed classes. The teacher's complained saying. how can we teach the ones who are so poor in their work at the same time we are teaching the ones who do well? It was after that classes became divided this way.

Segregating students was implemented based on teacher complaints in relation to mixed ability groups. Teachers justified segregation as a rational way of making teaching more efficient. Consequently, Revathi explained the impact of this decision on her teacher activities. She said, "now it is little bit easier for me to teach now [that we have tracked according to ability], actually it is way easier now, I like it". She described why, by noting, "now all the students are at the same ability level, so I can teach much easily, whereas in the earlier class I had to teach students according to their multiple levels." Revathi believed that tracking students based on ability meant that all the students within a tracked group had the same abilities. In explaining how this decision shaped her teaching activities, she said, "now I don't have to change the way I teach according to the students [ability] level, they are all the same within each division, we teach each class according to their level". Segregating homogenized students' abilities. This meant that teachers did not have to modify their lessons to meet multiple demands within a class.

> Segregation prioritized the needs of better performing students. Revathi continued, although segregating negatively impacts low-tracked students mentally, it is fair by our good students. Because if top students are mixed with the rest and we decide to teach to the level of lower students, then it is not right by the better students. We would be doing the wrong thing for the good students, that's not fair to our good students if we focus on the ones who are low.

Revathi pointed out how segregating students according to ability was ‘fair’ by the students who did well academically, despite negatively impacting low-ability students. This (mis)conception of what constituted fairness allowed teachers to prioritize N-disposable students, legitimizing the necessity for ability tracking. Because N-disposable students were deemed worthy of teacher attention, it was easy to prioritize their needs as the ‘fair’ thing to do. However, fairness was not talked about in relation to meeting the needs of students who were deemed low performers.

Despite rationalizing the need for ability tracking, teachers were aware of the negative impact on students in low-ability tracked groups. Anojan said, “now they have divided in this hierarchical ability order, so the students at the lowest level are affected the worst. One reason for that is that their minds and emotions are impacted negatively”. Prior to this segregationist order-building processes, all the students were in mixed ability groups. The harm caused to students in the low-ability tracked groups by this order-building process was deemed inevitable, like modernity’s argument in favor of the necessity of disposability of some groups (Bauman, 2004). While the practicality of a segregated system cannot be dismissed, the critique lies in prioritizing practicality that is devoid of equity, eliding what constitutes critical inclusion that seek to center marginalized students in inclusive spaces (Kozleski, Artiles & Waitoller, 2011; Naraian, 2017).

***Debilitation*.** Debilitation occurs when resources are systematically depleted from groups ear-marked for disposability (Puar, 2015). Students in low- ability tracked groups were debilitated by teachers who refused to teach. Consider the following scenario in which the principal tried to solve the problem of teachers refusing to teach low-ability tracked groups. Anojan said,

When that problem came up of teachers refusing to teach the low groups the principal

> said. let's cast lots, let's do a token, lottery like system and whoever gets the grade written in the slip of paper must teach that class. 6 teachers [out of the 8] refused to do that because, they were worried that they may end up getting this low division whom they didn't want to teach.

The principal decided to cast lots to determine who taught tracked groups. Teachers were not allocated to these groups based on who was capable of meeting student needs, rather the decision was left to chance. Teacher unwillingness to teach low-ability tracked students was no secret. Teachers protested openly. According to Anojan, leaving this decision up to chance misfired. He said, "these teachers somehow fought to teach the top-classes and they won. Others who didn't have a choice but to teach the lower classes, just went to class and didn't teach. Either way, the teachers got what they wanted". When teachers had no choice in choosing their class they went into the classes but resisted by not teaching debilitating students. In the following excerpt, students explained the debilitating consequences of involuntary assignment. They said,

> Malathi: That teacher also asks us, why are you coming to school? You can stay at home [just drop-out] isn't it?
>
> TH: Why is that?
>
> Malathi: That's the first thing he says to us. He says 'if I was a student like you all, I would just stay at home and drop-out of school'
>
> Sinduja: Or he says, if he was a student like us he would kill himself by hanging himself
>
> Varun: He says you can hang yourself on a rope and die instead of being in the low-track group, because it is so embarrassing to belong to this group (laughs)
>
> Shekar: He says the top division class is studying well, only you are not learning well. He says you are all in the gravel road, and instead of learning it's better you just stay at

> home. He asked is why are you getting wet in the rain and all and coming to school putting in so much effort, he says that.
>
> TH: So, when does he teach?
>
> Sinduja: He doesn't, this is what he says the whole class period
>
> Varun: No not the whole class period, sometimes he teachers something five minutes before the bell rings.

This conversation highlighted how a teacher who was upset at having to teach low-ability tracked groups debilitated and harmed students. He belittled their efforts in coming to school weathering the terrible monsoon season, and despite students making it to school in terrible weather, he did not teach them or did so only for five minutes. Not only did the teacher encourage students to drop-out of school, he also insinuated that these students are better off dead than performing poorly in academics, highlighting their unworthiness. When students were deemed disposable, debility took on pernicious turns, a type of violence that asserted which lives were worth living.

Debilitating was not only limited to harmful inter-personal interactions between students and teachers. Resources were intentionally depleted from low-ability tracked groups because teachers did not attend classes. Revathi noted,

> Some teachers don’t even go to the lower divisions. I have also noticed some of these teachers you know, if they are assigned to a lower division they don’t even go to teach them. They think and tell each other, what is the point teaching these students, why should I teach these ones?

Revathi pointed out collective decision-making processes leading to consensus among some teachers that these students did not deserve to be taught. They felt that there was no ‘point

teaching these students' reinforcing their disposable status. When students were deemed disposable, any effort expended on them was seen wasting resources. This resulted in depleting resources that debilitated students further.

> Describing how these debilitating decisions are implemented, Bhavani said,
>
> most teachers who take up the lower divisions think that they can fool the students in the low divisions, Pēy kāṭṭalam, [the can be cheated]. As long as there are teachers who feel like they can hoodwink these kids in the lower divisions the problem of these students not being taught at all will persist.

Bhavani pointed out that teachers assigned to low-ability tracked groups typically don't teach them. The phrase 'Pēy kāṭṭalam' indicated student gullibility which indicated teachers cheated students, taking advantage of their naïveté. The opinion Bhavani held was contradictory to the ways in which students made meaning of these realities. It was not that students were unaware of teacher proclivities toward debilitating them. Instead of interpreting what was happening to them as gullibility they revealed how power disparities between teachers and themselves constrained their ability to stop debilitation. They said,

> Vidya: Teachers come to class sometimes or they come to school and just don't come to class, they go to the canteen and sit and chat with other teachers. What can we do miss?
>
> Mathura: We know they do that on purpose, because they tell us you are the A [low-division] class, we are ashamed to come to your class and teach you.
>
> Vidya: Well, that is what they say, that's the reason they give us for not coming to teach us, what can we do miss?

Nothing about this conversation substantiated the claim that these students were unaware or naïve about of how they were debilitated. The reason for debilitation was obvious because

teachers told them why they were unworthy of being taught. Students showed nuanced understandings of the proclivities of some teachers who make collective decisions in debilitating them. Clearly, students understood they were being debilitated. By repeatedly saying ‘what can we do miss?’ they implied the insufficient power they possessed in disrupting debilitation processes.

Capacitation. When educational resources are scarce, triage decisions made by power brokers determine who is to survive and who is to be disposed of (Bauman, 2012). As a result, order-building systems distributed resources in ways that benefited some over others (Giroux, 2009b). Like the students in low-ability tracked groups, students in the top divisions needed academic support. Teachers intentionally increased student access to themselves. Ravindran said,

> Then the other thing is we have given [good] students a privilege. Family members and children can call us at any time and ask about their doubts. That is a wonderful privilege and resource. We tell them you don't have to worry about calling us, we tell them you don't have to hesitate, just call. Don't be afraid, call anytime early in the morning or late at night it doesn't matter to us. I tell them all the time to talk to me anytime.

Ravindran gave high performing students unfettered access to him inside and outside school. They were able to engage with him in meaningful ways as he sacrificed his own convenience to accommodate their needs. This stood in stark contrast to students in low-ability tracked groups who did not have access to teachers even within school.

Capacitating was evident as students in high ability groups were recipients of the best teachers and best teaching practices. Revathi said,

> Even when good teachers teach two classes in the same grade level, if they take one best division and one low division, which class do you think they pay more attention too?

> They will focus on how many students will pass in the best division, that's what they will pay attention to. Those student's will get the attention and they won't care about the other division. These teachers hoard the 'exam-students' but don't teach them equally, but these teachers are very good teachers they teach really well, but they do that mostly for the good students. That's whom they focus on.

Revathi explained that 'very good teachers' who 'teach really well' only do so for students in the best divisions. These students had access to the best teachers and their teaching practices, because teachers were intentional about the ways in which they distributed their attention to students they deemed worthy of their efforts. Teachers chose 'exam-students' as it was considered a mark of teacher competence to teach students taking National exams. Hoarding these classes did not mean they taught students equally. Revathi noted that teachers don't teach students equally, reserving their best teaching for the best students, thus capacitating them.

Another important aspect of capacitating was evident in how teachers created accommodations for students in N-disposable groups. It was common knowledge that large class sizes impeded student learning. In making sure the N-disposable group was not disadvantaged by class size, their class sizes were reduced by assigning two teachers for the top-division. Bhavani described how these decisions to capacitate were made. She said,

> Even in the top divisions when the classes are too big there maybe one or two in there who may fail you know. The probability is too high. So that is why we decided to divide the grade ten top division into two as well. We thought if we divide the grade tens from now on, then they can do even better marks next year. That is our target, so we thought of starting early with them so that in small classes we can ensure they get all our attention and do well at the exam. The English sir takes half of them I take lessons for half of

them. That's because they are the best division.

Bhavani explained that students in top divisions were worthy of receiving better supports. The N-disposable group was given more opportunities to engage in meaningful learning by restructuring the class and resourcing one class with two teachers. Capacitating was clear when two teachers taught roughly 20 students from the same class, as opposed to teaching over 45 students per class in the low-ability tracked groups, that is if teachers chose to teach them at all. Capacitating was evident as students in the top-divisions were given priority when it came to material resources. Bhavani and Revathi discussed how the distribution of resources took place based on administrative guidelines:

> Bhavani: As far as English is concerned that's how these books are sent. We are sent a limited number and told to give those books to the students who are doing well in school.
>
> Revathi: Yes, or what they say is that when these books come, first give them to the classes where the students are doing well and then the rest to be divided among the rest, so like then it is a book for two students or three students to share. That's how they send these books to be given.

Revathi and Bhavani discussed how they were required to give priority to the top-performing students by making textbooks available to them first, while letting students in low-ability tracks share textbooks when they ran short. This highlighted an important aspect of capacitating that determined who was supported, at the expense of whom. Therefore, capacitating was not an inevitable outcome of order-building, rather it was intentional in that it determined who survives in a system order-built by inequitable ideologies (Giroux, 2012).

Disposability highlighted in this theme mediated teaching activities. Students who were

considered disposable found themselves entangled in processes that segregated and debilitated them overtime. In contrast, students who were situated in the not-to-non-disposable continuum were capacitated. Disposability or the marking of students as disposable prevailed due to entrenched ideologies and its attendant practices at the intersection of biopolitical markers such as race and ability, and normative standards that mediated school performance. Data revealed how disposability animated processes and practices of segregation, debilitation, and capacitation pervasive in this school settings mediating the capillary life of day-to-day student and teacher activities.

Theme Two: Disjunctures in Student and Teacher activities

This theme explores disjunctures in student and teacher activities. Disjunctures are irregularities that emerge when different versions of reality shape the experiences of those participating in activity systems (Campbell & Gregor, 2004). Disjunctures reveal how the 'actualities of everyday lives and ideological representations' converge and diverge when they work within institutional structures like schools, organizing ways of knowing which maintain inequitable circumstances (Smith, 2005, p.79). Disjunctures constrained meaningful learning and teaching when they were not critically evaluated, letting inequitable and exclusionary processes prevail in school systems (Greene, 1987). Disjunctures become evident when participants in activity systems explained their activities. Disjunctures were evident in how teachers organized their teaching activities (i.e., repetitive teaching) based on their understanding of student abilities. Disjunctures highlighted in this section does not argue that teachers and students lacked ingenuity in responding to their realities (Sannino, Engeström & Lemos, 2016). Rather, this theme revealed how disjunctures shaped student and teacher activities constraining emancipatory possibilities.

Prioritizing Different Aspects of the Object Engeström (1999) described objects as "enduring, constantly reproduced purposes of collective activity systems" (p.190), meaning, they drive the activities of participants. As such, "objects are durable concerns and carriers of motives: they are generators and foci of attention, volition, effort and meaning" (Engeström, 2015 p. xvi). Objects are socially constructed, historically and culturally situated (desired) outcomes that shaped the ways student and teacher activities are organized (Engeström, 1999; Cole, 1998). Disjunctures emerged as teachers and students prioritized different activities toward in meeting the object of passing end of year high-stakes exams.

Succeeding in examinations. Covering curriculum objectives rather than ensuring that students understood academic concepts was one way in which teachers prioritized achieving the object of students passing exams. It seemed that teachers felt that once the curriculum was covered (regardless of students understanding the content), they could use saved up time to revise content closer to the examination. Revathi explained,

> I try to finish up the syllabus very quickly, because I am trying to finish the syllabus I don't spend a lot of time on the lessons. I don't let them do all the practice sums in the text books. I just do two practice sums each and just like that I fully finish the syllabus first. Then I revise the whole thing closer to the exams. When I am done covering the whole syllabus, then I do the whole thing as again as revision so that they remember.

In completing 'the syllabus very quickly' Revathi was saving time to revise. Completing the vast syllabus was an institutional constrain imposed on her (an extended discussion of the syllabus is found in chapter 6). Therefore, teachers did not rush to impede student learning – they thought the students needed all the information even if they did not understand, assuming they can pick up what they missed during review.

The disjuncture became evident when students found rushing through lessons constricting their ability to succeed in examinations, primarily because teachers did not take the time to explain key concepts. Students explained,

> Nadesan: We can understand if they [teachers], teach a little slowly, and explain calmly
>
> Yes, it doesn't climb into our heads when they teach so fast, we don't understand or know what it is that they are saying, that is why we get low marks.
>
> Mayuran: We don't understand and that happens when teachers don't explain the lesson well to us. They just rush rush through the lesson just reading notes or reading the text book. They have no time to explain. So, we don't understand it [what is being taught].

Rushing through lessons did not help students understand lessons. Students attributed not understanding lessons as the primary reason they were unable to score points at examinations. None of them mentioned the utility of revision in improving retention. They clarified,

> Sujani: I struggled in that exam, because the teacher only did one some, she explained just one sum and then expected us to do the rest on our own, that made it difficult for me to understand what to do at the test.
>
> Varun: If the teachers if they use all that time to explain the lessons to us somehow, then that will be easy for us to remember, we remember what to do when we understand only.

Understanding lessons helped students retain content, rather than reviews conducted toward the end. What students shared was evident in their examination responses. The following image is an example of Sujani's responses at the exam.

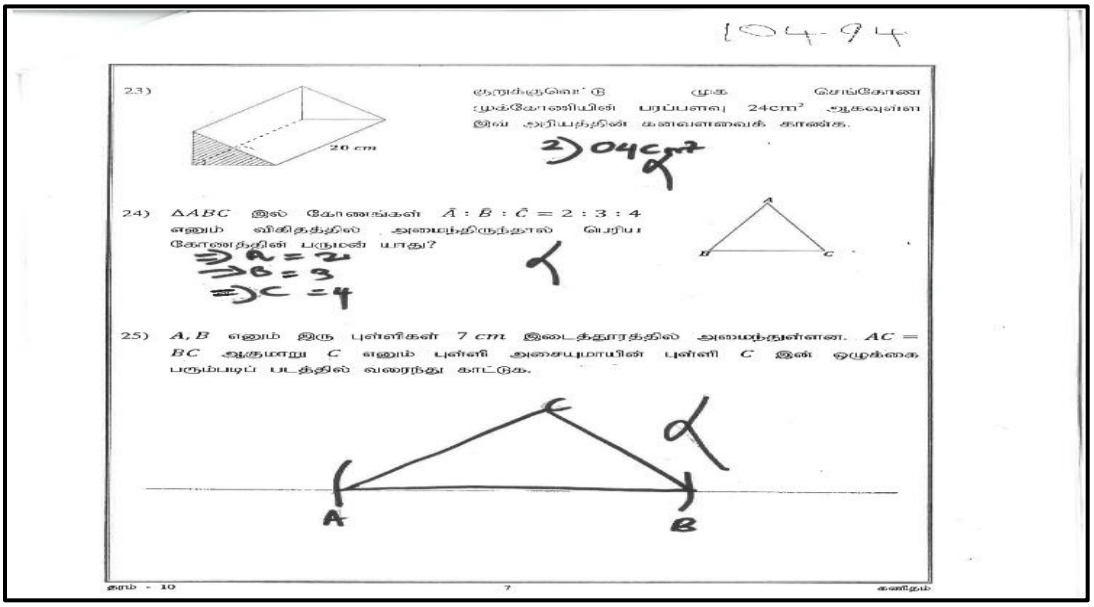

Figure 4: Math Exam Paper Sujani

Her responses revealed that she was able to read the questions because she followed directions accurately (i.e. question number 25). However, she did not know the calculations that were necessary to find the answer, substantiating her previous claim that she didn't know what to do. The disjuncture was clear. Teachers believed that exposing the students to the ideas was necessary to increase their odds of being able to do the exam and that circling back to review content was more effective in improving test scores. Students prioritized understanding content as a means of performing well in the exam. This disjuncture resulted constraining meaningful learning and teaching activities.

Accommodating student needs. Reducing content was a strategy teachers' used in attempting to accommodate the learning needs of those in low-ability tracked groups. This decision assumed that students in the low-ability tracked groups could not handle vast amounts

of complex content. Thus, the accommodation was meant to teach students just enough content to pass[3] the exam. Ravindran explained,

> Since we are focusing on reducing the number of W's [failed scores] from our class, we don't teach everything to the lower tracks. We just select the sections that the students might be able to score and teach just enough stuff for them to pass.

Ravindran pointed out this was necessary because, "if we give them [low-ability tracked students] complex questions based on difficult content, they won't understand. We know they won't be able to do it." Revathi echoed a similar view stating, "our aim is to reduce the number of W's [failed scores] we get in the subjects we teach. Our goal is to get these students to a point of passing, especially the ones in the lower divisions". She clarified that this decision was necessary stating, "instead of wasting time teaching students something more, we teach just enough for them to pass. If we teach everything, it is possible that we will ruin their chances of even getting an S [ordinary pass] in the exam".

Ravindran and Revathi kept a keen eye on the minimal score students needed to pass exams. Their rationale for reducing content was to make sure that students are taught 'just enough' material to pass the examination, 'instead of wasting time' attempting to teach all the content. These teachers explicitly stated their 'foci', and 'aims' for reducing content which seemed like a reasonable accommodation. Teaching objectives were predicated on reducing the number of W's [failing grades] in each of the cohorts they taught.

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[3] The grade scale is as follows: 100-75 scores (Distinction- A), 74-65 scores (Very Good Pass B), 64-50 scores (Credit Pass-C), 49-35 scores (Ordinary Pass- S), 34-00 scores (Failure- W)

The disjuncture became evident when students commented on how this accommodation constrained their ability to pass exams. Students pointed to specific problems they faced because teachers reduced the content. They said,

> Pradeep: Teachers say for those like you all [in low tracks] this much teaching is enough, and they teach less material. They say if we teach you anything more that is not going to be helpful to you, because you will not understand anything more than what we are teaching now
>
> Akila: The thing is all of it comes mostly the difficult stuff they don't teach only come in the exam. The problem is nothing that we study come on the exams, we don't see anything we study on the exam paper. We work very hard, we try and try really hard, but the sad thing is only one or two of the things we read and memorize come on the exam paper.

The discussion pointed out that teaching less affected them negatively because the exam tested the entire curriculum and therefore reducing content did not prepare them to obtain scores even when they worked hard to learn what was taught. Students argued that these teacher practices obstructed their objective of passing exams.

It is important to point out that disjunctures were not always visible by looking at teaching activities in opposition to student activities. Even when students and teachers saw the same activity as useful, disjunctures emerged because of differing views of its utility. Students reported that reducing the amount of content taught was helpful to them under certain conditions. Students shared their experiences:

> Vinod: For us in the low-divisions they give less notes. They give us less notes in a way we can understand, explaining stuff simply. They teach everything but point out

what is important.

Mohan: Less notes meaning, it's given in a way we understand. The teaching is simple, and we know exactly what is important in the exam. That way teaching less is good.

Students explained the ways in which content reduction was useful. The disjuncture emerged when teachers positioned reducing content as a response to their students' inability to cope with content complexity, while students saw its utility as making content more accessible. Students highlighted the importance of reducing the complexity of explanations which improved their comprehension. These disjunctures made teacher and student activities asynchronous, constraining meaningful learning and teaching.

Prioritizing Reductive Instructional Strategies Disjunctures in student and teacher activities were evident in the ways teachers prioritized different aspects of their instructional strategies. In teaching low-ability tracked groups, teachers adhered to reductive pedagogical strategies which included teaching simplified rudimentary tasks repetitively. These pedagogical strategies were reductive because they focused on breaking up complex tasks in to smaller components. Then these simple components were taught separately in ways that did not support students to engage in complex tasks. I provide examples of reductive instructional strategies; rudimentary tasks and repetition.

Rudimentary tasks. Teachers focused on teaching student's rudimentary tasks by reducing the complexity of what students needed to learn. My observation notes and a photograph of a students' book highlight these aspects. These examples are indicative of similar

patterns I noticed across all the classes the four focal teachers taught. In this example Bhavani taught a second language English class to a low-ability tracked group. My observation notes explained:

> Although Bhavani spent considerable amount of attention to engaging students in the class her main mode of response generation was limited question and answer, in chorus form or individual responses. The lesson was on translating every single word from English into Tamil. The students often got similar sounding words mixed up like, think and thing, anyone, someone. By trying to translate directly, a student thought the word [toward] meant [second ward]. Each translated was written down on their text book above the English word. (Classroom Observation: October 17, 2017).

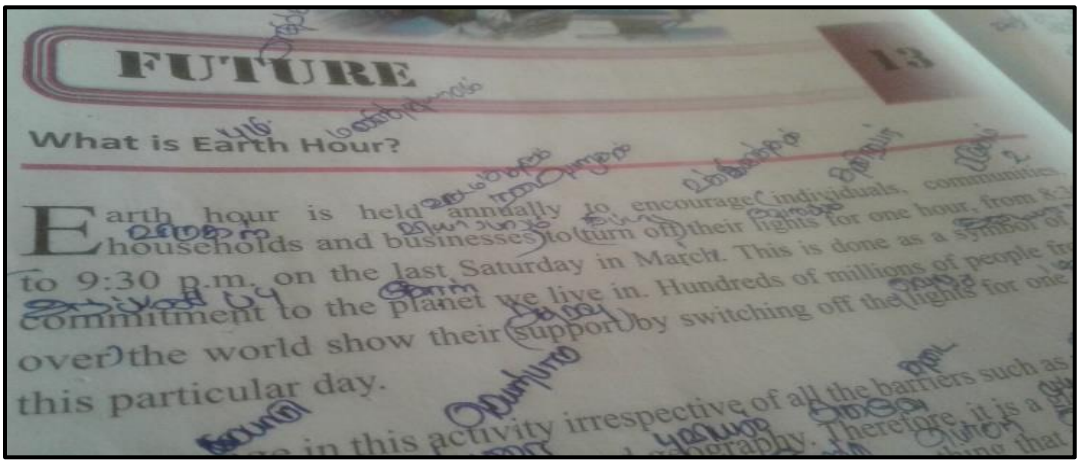


Figure 5: English Text Book October 17, 2017

In this lesson, Bhavani's main mode of teaching English reading comprehension was to engage her students in translating a passage from English into Tamil. The photograph of the text book shows how students wrote the meaning of the English words in Tamil. Confusions occurred when English words used in common Tamil parlance were translated without realizing that they were English words. For example, students confused the word 'toward' with the word 'ward'. Geographic areas in which students live are divided into wards (a vestige of British colonialism).

Each ward is numbered (e.g. Ward 9). Thus, students knew the word ‘ward’ (although they did not know it as an English word) and confused it with the similar sounding word ‘toward’. In addition, once Bhavani translated the word, students verbally repeated the Tamil meaning. For example, the video transcript for this class was as follows:

Bhavani: What is (In Tamil) ‘generally’?

Student: Paramparai (generation in Tamil)

Bhavani: That is generation, I want to know what ‘generally’ means?, that means pothuwagha (generally in Tamil), what does it mean?

Students: Pothuwagha

Bhavani: (reads off the book) ‘aims’, what is aims?

Student: It is kurikkoal, (goal in Tamil)

Bhavani: Correct it is goal, next ‘to show’, what does that mean?

Student: Show is a Padam (movies in Tamil is usually called a shows)

Bhavani: All you think about are movies, ‘show’ means to reveal (in Tamil)

(Bhavani_Ten B:10.17.17)

The entire class period continued in this way. The lesson was about ‘earth hour’ as the text book shows, but Bhavani’s teaching was focused on translating every word rather than reading for the meaning of the passage highlighting the reductive nature of this endeavor. Later Bhavani had the opportunity to explain this activity. She said, “the students’ standard of English is also terribly low as you can see. Especially the division I teach is very low. Because of that, I just do chalk and talk like this.” By chalk and talk Bhavani meant direct instruction that focused on translating words, instead of explaining the overall meaning.

The disjuncture became evident when Bhavani shared the disappointing results students

obtained at examinations. She said,

> No matter how hard I try and teach them, when it comes to the exam, they can't read the question and understand. They can't read and understand what is being asked. I wondered what's the point of all the work I do if it ends up with all of them getting a zero. This is very upsetting to me.

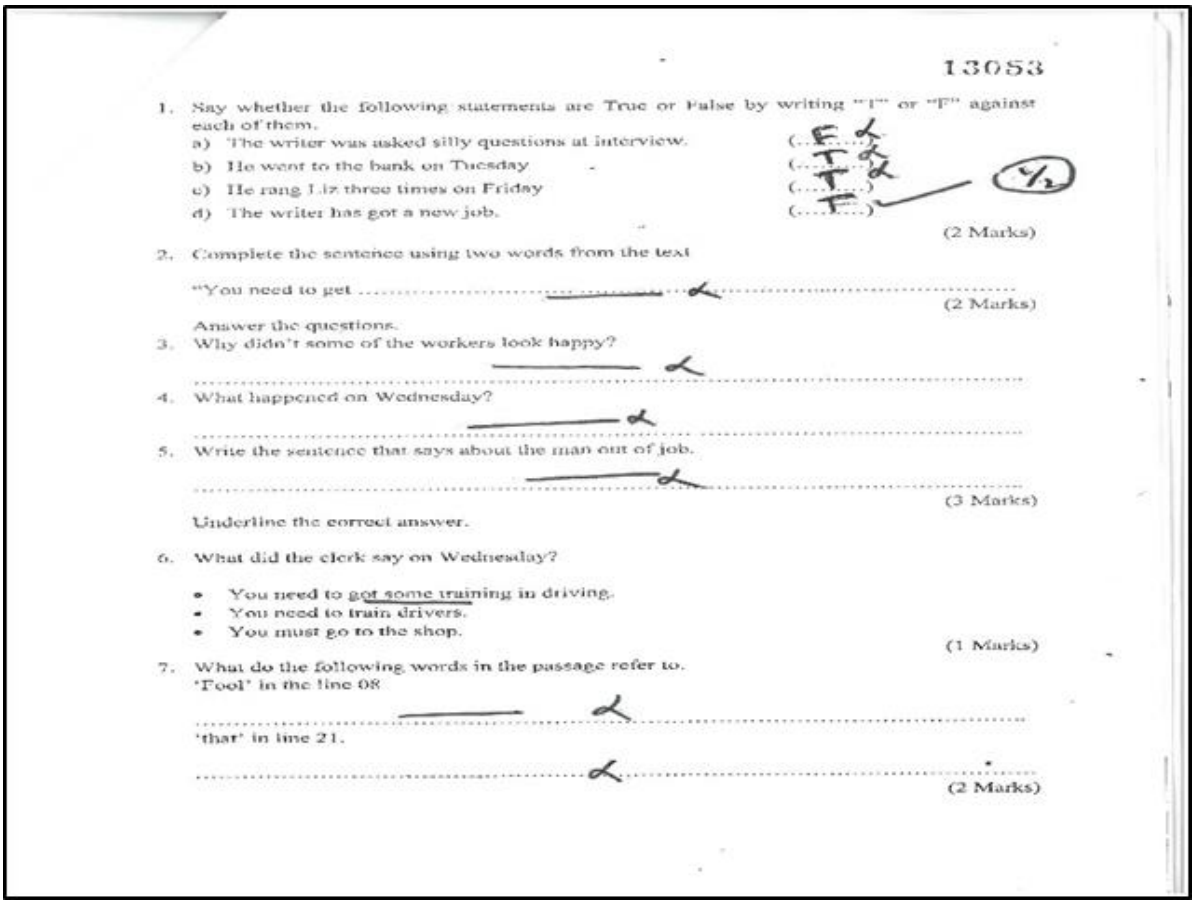
Bhavani's frustration was understandable, as her students scored an average of 14 points out of 100 on this examination. Student's exam responses indicated that they were not able to read and understand. Consider the following images that show an example of how a student responded.

Test 15

Read the following passage and answer the questions.

Friday for once I have something important to put in my diary. Normally I have to think of something to write about – but today was different. Something special happened: I lost my job! well, I'm going to bed now. I'll think about it in the morning.

Monday I woke up at 6.30. The sun was shining; the birds were singing. For a while I felt really happy. Then I remembered. I hadn't got a job. I could stay in bed all morning-but I didn't want to. I went into the kitchen and made myself some tea. I sat drinking it by the window. People were hurrying to work. Some of them didn't look very happy. Perhaps they didn't want to work! "fools" I wanted to shout at them. "You fools! At least you have jobs!.



13053

1. Say whether the following statements are True or False by writing "T" or "F" against each of them.
   a) The writer was asked silly questions at interview. (...F...)
   b) He went to the bank on Tuesday (...T...)
   c) He rang Liz three times on Friday (...T...)
   d) The writer has got a new job. (...F...)

(2 Marks)

2. Complete the sentence using two words from the text

"You need to get .....

(2 Marks)

Answer the questions.

3. Why didn't some of the workers look happy?

.....

4. What happened on Wednesday?

.....

5. Write the sentence that says about the man out of job.

.....

(3 Marks)

Underline the correct answer.

6. What did the clerk say on Wednesday?

- You need to get some training in driving.
- You need to train drivers.
- You must go to the shop.

(1 Marks)

7. What do the following words in the passage refer to.
   'Fool' in the line 08

.....

'that' in line 21.

.....

(2 Marks)

Figure 6: English Exam Response

The student's examination paper showed the ways in which Bhavani's teaching strategy of translating words was not conducive to performing successfully at the exam. All the questions

required reading the text and comprehending what was written. Simply asking students to translate each word did not prepare them to engage in the tasks the exam required. Unlike the textbook image (see Figure 5), it was evident that the student did not translate every single word at the exam. This indicated that despite translating word for word in class, students were unable to engage in this task independently. In short, nothing about Bhavani's instructional strategy helped her students comprehend the text, resulting in students obtaining poor scores at examinations. The disjuncture that emerged due to engaging students in rudimentary tasks due to their assumed low abilities was evident limiting student performance.

Repetition. Teachers emphasized repeating content, an instructional strategy used to improve content retention. Revathi explained,

> I only teach the sections that I think they can do. Then I do those sections over and over, a again and again. I don't let those children waste time meddling with complex sums. I draw two or three diagrams repeatedly, that's the only way. Repeatedly drawing that's how they will remember. Doing the same questions over and over again, means that they will know what to do, and which steps they need to follow in order.

Revathi taught limited content repeatedly. She drew the same diagrams repeatedly assuming it will improve students' ability to retain information. There was no indication that students needed to understand why the steps she taught had a sequence. Rather, they were required to memorize the order by just following instructions, valorizing memorizing over understanding content.

The disjuncture was revealed when students noted repetitive teaching did not improve their understanding of the content. They said,

> Varun: When teachers explain the say the same thing repeatedly
>
> Karthik: So, when we ask them to explain, they teach the same thing again, they do the

same thing, say the same thing all over again.

Varun: Well we asked teachers to explain again because we didn't understand what they said to us in the first place right (laughs), and we are still waiting for the explanation (laughs). No point in them teaching the same thing again and again in the same way

Despite the light-hearted ways students shared their experiences, Varun and Karthik explained the futility of teaching the same content repeatedly. Students joked that although teachers repeated what they taught, it did not improve their understanding of the content. To be clear, students did not always oppose repetitive teaching so long as it improved their understanding.

Disjunctures were evident even when there was consensus among students and teachers in what constituted good teaching. For example, in describing their views on good teachers, students shared how repetition was useful. They said,

Vani: If we don't understand something she explains it to us again and again.

Mohan: Perhaps because of the ones who wouldn’t know the answer the first time, she teaches it again and explains in a different way.

Bodhi: This helps us understand better. She tried different ways of saying the same thing We understand then isn’t it? we hear it two or three times.

Vani: If there is something that we didn't understand the first time then by repeating it we can get it the next time, for instance if she explains it three times again we might understand it at the third instance.

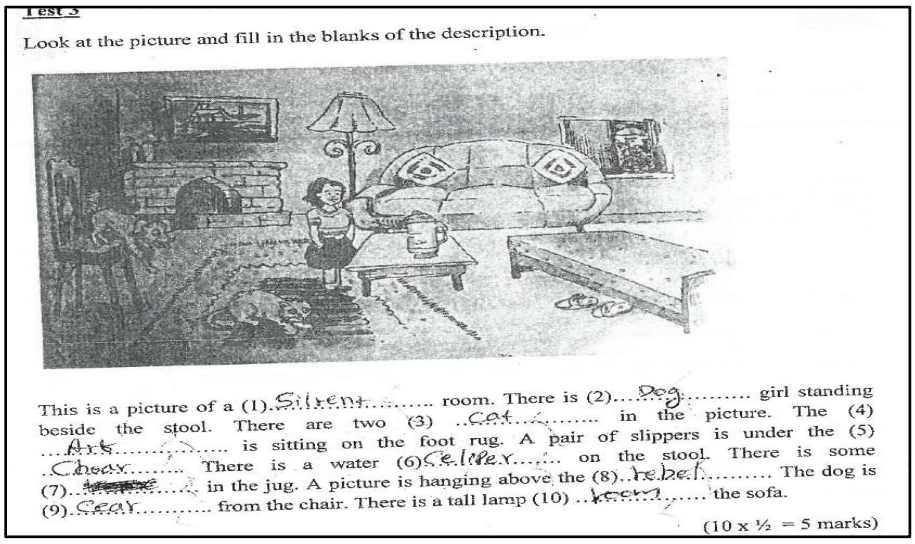
Although students appreciated teachers repeating content, their understanding of how learning took place through repetition was based on teachers centering student understanding over

improving retention. This disjuncture was not visible by looking at teaching strategies at face-value, such as repetition. Rather, it was in the divergent ways these activities served student needs was what made disjunctures apparent.

Reductive Instructional strategies worked together. In the following example, rudimentary tasks are paired with repetition. Bhavani said,

> There is an improvement in their understanding. I can say that. When I say the same thing, teach the same thing over and over and over again, they seem to get it. I teach the very basics like a, and, the and so on. I teach them where to put each word. Then they practice this over and over again. The ones in that low level I think seem to be learning something now, I keep reminding them. Because now when I say future tense, they say 'will', and then when I ask if they have to insert 'have' they are able to that.

Bhvani showed that she had limited her teaching to basics by telling students where to insert small words like 'a', 'and' and 'the'. Then she did these tasks 'over and over again'. Although Bhavani claimed that she saw an improvement in students understanding, the disjuncture became visible when students were asked to perform a fill in the blanks task at the examination. Consider the following image of one of Bhavani's student's response at the exam.



Test 3

Look at the picture and fill in the blanks of the description.

This is a picture of a (1) Silvent room. There is (2) Dog girl standing beside the stool. There are two (3) Cat in the picture. The (4) Ark is sitting on the foot rug. A pair of slippers is under the (5) Chear There is a water (6) Celler on the stool. There is some (7) [illegible] in the jug. A picture is hanging above the (8) Tebel The dog is (9) Cear from the chair. There is a tall lamp (10) Keem the sofa.

(10 x ½ = 5 marks)

Figure 7: Student Response Exam Paper

Bhavani valorized repetitively teaching small words and tenses, while the examination required a different set of skills from the student. For instance, this task required students to look at the picture and fill in the blanks. To do this task, students needed to read each sentence, understand what it meant, look at the picture and come up with a noun that made sense in the sentence. Nothing about the task Bhavani engaged her students in during class prepared them to do this task successfully. Disjunctures that emerged due to teacher instructional strategies highlighted the ways in which teacher activities and student activities become hollow when the utility of these strategies was deployed to meet student needs in asynchronous ways. Disjunctures explained in this chapter illustrated the ways in which prioritizing different aspects of the object and prioritizing reductive instructional strategies created and maintained disjunctures. At this point in the study, teachers were not asked to reflect deeply on their construction of their knowledges and its consequent practices. This section merely highlighted the ways in which disjunctures became visible when teachers and students shared their experiences and tried to make visible how their knowledges were constructed in institutional settings

Relationship between Disposability and Disjunctures

While teachers believed they were doing what was best to improve student performance, contending with disjunctures caused considerable frustration. These frustrations led to teachers reifying the prevalence of disposability. The ways in which teachers negotiated disjunctures resulted in instantiating disposability. Simultaneously, the prevalence of disposability created a way in which teachers could contend with disjunctures without considering its full implications. Ravindran negotiated disjunctures by noting that the reason students did not respond to their instructional strategies was due to their inherent abilities. He said,

> That is that Childs' ability [capability]. The results in the subjects demonstrate that they have an inherent ability. That ability can be about paying very good attention in class or it's the ability to memorize very well, these students in the low class don't have that capacity so they do poorly.

Ravindran made an explicit connection as to why some students succeeded and others did not. By invoking the ideology of 'inherent ability' Ravindran addressed the disjuncture by seeing students as inherently capable (or not), thus absolving his teaching methods from scrutiny. Revathi clarified how disjunctures played out. She said,

> The thing is they respond immediately once taught, but if you ask them the same thing the next day they are unable to do it. Uh… I did revision, I taught them using the same sum and told them the same thing, repeated the same instructions again, then I gave them another sum using the same model [of the question] and did it with them. Now these ones, they had an exam and I corrected the paper and gave it to them. These ones here are the ones who got grades in singular digits. Their marks were 9, 7, 6 that's the marks these ones got out of 100, it made me very angry.

Revathi was frustrated and upset with their students, because despite all the repetition and rudimentary tasks conducted in class students were unable to perform well. At this point in the study, teachers struggled to understand why their efforts yielded poor outcomes. Predictably, teacher frustrations led to teachers blaming students. Revathi said,

> One thing might be, in terms of why they struggle is carelessness. There are a few who will never understand at all no matter what we do. Some of them haven't even done the sections they understood. So many of them didn't understand the question they got all mixed up and confused themselves.

Revathi noted that despite her teaching efforts which mostly constituted reducing content and repetition that some students 'will never understand'. She negotiated the disjuncture by blaming students for their 'carelessness', 'not understanding the question, and getting confused'. There was no evidence that Revathi connected the student performance to her teaching, maintaining disjunctures that made disposability imminent.

Conclusion

Disjunctures and disposability together produced knowledges that would keep the disjunctures and disposability intact undermining equity and inclusion in schools. The two themes pointed out the complex ways in which student and teacher activities are mediated in school settings. Disposability was constructed in ways that implicated sociocultural, historical factors within and outside schools such as caste ideologies and deficit-oriented thinking. Disjunctures on the other hand revealed how student and teacher activities impeded meaningful learning for both teachers and students. This chapter showed how disposability and disjunctures maintained inequitable, exclusionary systems harming multiply-marginalized students.

Chapter 5

The Co-construction of Student and Teacher Subjectivities

I n chapter 4 I discussed how disposability and disjunctures mediated student and teacher activities. Here, I focus on how teachers understood themselves in relation to the activities they engaged in. Subjectivity is an analytic tool that transcends additive identities and speaks to the complex nature of intersectionality, and how being positioned in specific ways orders day-to-day activities. Examples include being raced within a social context such as a grocery store when a Latinx is steered to the Mexican themed food without asking for such assistance. Another example might be the school psychologist who introduces a Southeastern Asian mother to a mixed group of Chinese, Thai, and Vietnamese mothers learning to speak English thus emphasizing relational aspects based on identity markers and their inextricable connections to structural markers such as nationality (Crenshaw, 1991; Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Subjectivity resists normative constructions and stereotypes of individuals and their experiences (i.e., teachers in war-affected school settings). Subjectivity accentuates the politics and power that shape subjective positions. In the example above, the school psychologist asserts her subjective opinions that an Asian mother should be connected to other Asian mothers for support. The mother receiving this gesture may think that the school psychologist knows what is best for her and internalize the message that I should be making friends with other Asian women even if my cultural, linguistic, political, and economic resources are not similar to the group that I am being told to join. Subjectivity considers the activities that engender subject positions and positioning, revealing how they are embraced and resisted in sociocultural, historical contexts (Smith, 2012). Subjectivities are fluid co-constructions created in relation to other subjectivities (Lewis & Mills, 2003; Spivak, 1990). This active and continuous construction is intimately

connected to individual and collective conceptualizations of identities, ideologies, positionalities. All subjectivities are animated and maintained by the distribution and exercise of ideological, political, and interpersonal power that is relational.

The relational optic substantiates the use of the term co-constructed used in this analysis. Co-constructed subjectivities mediated how students and teachers experienced and participated in school activities. Everyday activities and experiences produce subjectivities that shape knowledges, mediating the ways in which individuals and groups make sense of their worlds in relation to others. I use the plural of knowledges purposefully, to emphasize the multiple kinds of knowledge that undergird how individuals and groups make sense of their lived experiences (Harraway, 1991). Science is a knowledge system based on assumptions that pursue specific kinds of truth. But it is not the only knowledge system (Rose, 1997). Subjectivities continue to accrue and dislocate knowledges creating strong valences that mediate how the world is viewed and interpreted. Knowledges and individual subjectivities that are grounded in lived experiences interact and develop. This interactivity produces responses or valences toward specific world views. The combination of knowledges and subjectivities mediate how individuals and groups view and interpret the world. In this chapter I draw attention to four ways in which subjectivities were co-constructed: (a) re-ordering school structures, (b) interpreting war disruptions, (c) teacher-student activities, and (d) teacher-student relationships.

Theory of Subjectivity In this analysis I draw from black, third world, postcolonial feminist theories to describe the ways in which subjectivities are co-constructed (Collins, 1986; Lewis & Mills, 2003; Loomba, 2003). Subjectivity is a study of social, historical, and cultural factors that organize collective experiences, focusing on the lived intersections (Mirza, 2009, Puar, 2009, 2013). Using ethnographic methods, I mapped multiple ways in which subjectivities

became constructed (Campbell & Gregor, 2004). My analysis explored how subjectivities were constructed using Das and Kleinman's (2000) definition of subjectivity as "the felt interior experience of the person that includes his or her positions in a field of relational power" (p.1). In this analysis the concept of subjectivity was limited to how it played out in deeply inequitable spaces (Spivak, 1988). Foregrounding subjectivity served to emphasize how power, ideology and identity mediated relationships among individuals and groups positioned in various intersectional, fluid configurations that maintained oppression without losing sight how power mediates (Mirza, 2009). Das and Kleinman note the study of subjectivities allows "an exploration of the violence embedded in the 'normal' patterns of sociality" (p. 15). As such, the experiences of students and teachers in this study were not meant to valorize experience. Rather, experiences offered opportunities to examine the 'interpretation of the social world that needs explaining' (Mirza, 2009, p.5).

Crenshaw's (1991) original theory of intersectionality proposed intersectionality as a fluid formation. This conception recognized subject formation as an assemblage, "recognizing agency but in describing how one comes to perceive the other', what Puar (2009) calls the convivial, political praxis. Puar says "conviviality unlike notions of resistance, oppositionality, subversion and transgressions foregrounds categories such as race, gender and sexuality as events-as encounters-rather than entities or attributes of the subject" (Puar, 2009. p. 168). For example, my data revealed how similar experiences became re-interpreted by power brokers in day-to-day school events (Johnson & McRuer, 2014). This analysis finds its essence in the intersubjectivity generated by resistant meaning making processes in complex systems of oppression (Lugones, 2003). I use the optic of co-constructing subjectivities to explaining the relational aspects of positioning teachers and students engaged within histories of violence and

ideological divides.

Co-construction of Subjectivities in relation to Re-ordering Organizational Structures

In this section, I discuss three ways in which organizational structures were re-ordered in relation to promotion decisions, mobility between tracks and organizing learning supports. Re-ordering organizational structures in schools instantiated and dislodged existing subjectivities and or propelled new subjectivities. I describe how these factors co-constructed student and teacher subjectivities. Re-ordering the school's social organization involved locating relative power with decision makers while culling power from those who must adhere to new rules and the people who formulated them (Smith, 2006). In describing the following, I aim to show the processes by which subjectivities were co-constructed.

Promotion Decisions and Student Responses Decisions in relation to promoting students to the next grade revealed how a newly imposed social organization of schools co-constructed teacher and student subjectivities. In the following quote, Anojan explained a decision made by the sectional head of the building about which students will be promoted to the next grade. The following excerpt was Anojan's response when I asked him if there was a relationship between this decision and students' deciding to drop-out of school. The situation highlighted one of the re-ordering activities: the use of cumulative grade tallies to determine which students will be promoted. Anojan described his own subjectivity as an implementer of a school decision intended to motivate students. He explained the policy decision and its implementation:

> There were no problems at school at all, they [students] just stopped coming to school on their own. We've just told everyone that, only students who get more than 275 marks for the main five subjects in total will only be promoted the next

> grade. We said if not, we will not promote them.

Anojan positioned the students' response as problematic, without considering if the administrative decision was sensible. He seemed to consider that the students' decision in leaving school rather than being retained, to be a freely made choice. He continued, "so I think they thought that if they aren't promoted they will have to study with those currently in 9th grade, right? and then decided to give up on studies fully." Anojan maintained that the students' decisions to drop out of school was not related to 'problems at school'. By noting that their decisions to stop 'coming to school on their own' he disconnected the relationship between school processes and the students' decision to drop out. Anojan disregarded the power imbalance that shaped decisions, positioning students' having equal power in making decisions and negotiating attendant consequences.

The decision the school administrator made was suspect, as it was evident that some students would not be able to achieve the cut-off for being promoted. Anojan explained,

> I have the lowest performing students. None of them who do really well by getting high marks. The class average is only 18. I have one student, in all the ten subjects the total he got is 60 points. Even when we add all the five subjects they get only about 90 to 100 marks in total.

Anojan's account of his students' performances was corroborated by school records. On average, students in low-ability tracks obtained 98 points in their five core subjects. School data showed that student grades in his class per subject ranged from 0 to 28. He did not question whether the demand to accumulate 275 points was reasonable or fair. Nor did he seem to critique the retention policy and its implications for dropping out that is 'to give up on studies fully'. Despite these unreasonable demands, all four teachers positioned the students as those making

foolish choices in response to these demands. Anojan's comments reflected those of his colleagues. Anojan elaborated,

> One of them said that if he is not promoted that he is going to kill himself. I told him please don't do something stupid like that. I told him instead to study more, I told him he has about 12 days before the exam, so he must study and get the points he needs to be promoted. I don't think he will kill himself, but you know this is how these students think. Why can't they study instead?

Anojan was upset this student threatened to kill himself. Yet, he saw the student's desperate response as the problem, and not the unreasonable demand placed on him. This interview was conducted at the final term (semester) of the school year. The points students scored at examinations had been declining steadily over the school year. Disregarding these realities, Anojan insisted that the correct response to this demand should motivate the student to study instead of giving up on life. Anojan justified the new policy by invoking the power of motivation. Students who decided not to try, or who tried and failed are simply not motivated enough. In exercising power to determine who gets promoted, Anojan's subjectivities shifted to accommodate the additional power that he had in this situation. In this co-construction, it was not attributes such as race or gender that shaped subjectivities but the exercise of power and its residual subjectivity that diminished the stature of the powerless, accentuating the conviviality of political praxis (Puar, 2009).

Teachers rarely considered the ways in which students in low-ability groups could meet these demands. By placing the onus of working toward the goal squarely on students they implored students to "study". The teachers seemed inattentive to the institutional and systemic barriers that made independent studying and learning arduous if not impossible for students who

were multiply-marginalized. These constraints included access to good teaching, study materials, and opportunity to practice and self-correct that students needed in order to learn effectively on their own (as discussed in chapter 4).

The fact that a student threatened to kill himself (a common occurrence by youth in the area in which this study was conducted) was dismissed as a form of weakness or irrationality on the students' part, shaping the students' subjectivity. Yet in this context, the threat of suicide cannot be dismissed as exaggeration, making its likelihood highly plausible. The following excerpt from my field notes was based on a conversation I had with the psychiatrist in the district hospital where this study was conducted.

> Dr. Kanagasabai said suicide in this area is still high. He said suicide among young people is so high, they have lost control of the situation. He also said that there is nothing that can be done for these students (they are all seventeen and eighteen) and when they make up their mind that life is not worth living, even a trivial thing triggers a suicide attempt. He said during the war and in early 2009 he warned the national mental health sector that a problem generation like this would rise due to what they witnessed during the war. He said no one supported this effort and did not take his warnings seriously. (Field Notes: October 23, 2017)

I refer to this conversation to highlight the ways in which multiple sociocultural factors within and outside school shape youth experiences, and how quickly and profoundly decisions in schools can alter student's lives. In fact, while writing this chapter a student from the area who sat for the Ordinary Level exam last December (2017) committed suicide because she did not obtain scores needed to continue to the Advanced Level grade. Much like the students who participated in this study, she was seventeen years old, lost her parents during the war and lived

with her disabled grandmother (Personal Communication, Psychosocial Worker, May 28, 2018). Dr. Kanangasabai highlighted the enduring impact of war that reverberates to the present moment shaping student subjectivities clearly highlighting "the mutually constitutive nature of long and complex social, political and economic struggles and the historically fashioned identities-in-practice and subjectivities that the produce" (Holland & Lave, 2000 p.3). Living in war-affected contexts have lasting reverberations that establish how lives can be easily lost, social relationships could be easily disrupted, and those who remain a live after wars will forever bare indelible effects such as injury, poverty, and alienation. These factors shaped the subjectivities of all those who lived in war-affected conditions, yet what the above quotes signify were the ways in which fundamental concepts of what it meant to be alive or dead shaped subjectivities, mediating the co-construction of subjectivities in school spaces.

Mobility Between Ability-tracks In reifying the ideology of meritocracy, Ravindran explained another decision made to re-order the social organization of school through persuading students that there was flexibility in moving in and out of ability-tracked groups. Ravindran clarified,

> I have told them all that there is only one division that is the best division. But the thing is, 'you in this low division', I have told them if you get a higher average than the ones in the best division that I will promote you and demote those from the higher group to the lower group. I know this will function as a way of motivating students in the lower divisions to get out of this group. But they must get a higher average than the ones in the best division, that's all they need to do.

Ravindran saw this promotion tactic as a motivating factor, a win-win for all students regardless of their current ability track. However, grades showed students in the top division obtained an

average of 350 points in their five core subjects (roughly 70 points per subject) in comparison to the average score of 98 in the low-ability tracks (roughly 20 points per subject). For instance, the image below which was taken from the school grade book. The arrows point to the student who was placed first in the grade and the student who was placed 32. The top student had 824 points in total out of 1000, and the student at the lowest level had 221 points. The student performing at lower level needed roughly 600 points to catch up, which was impossible to obtain.

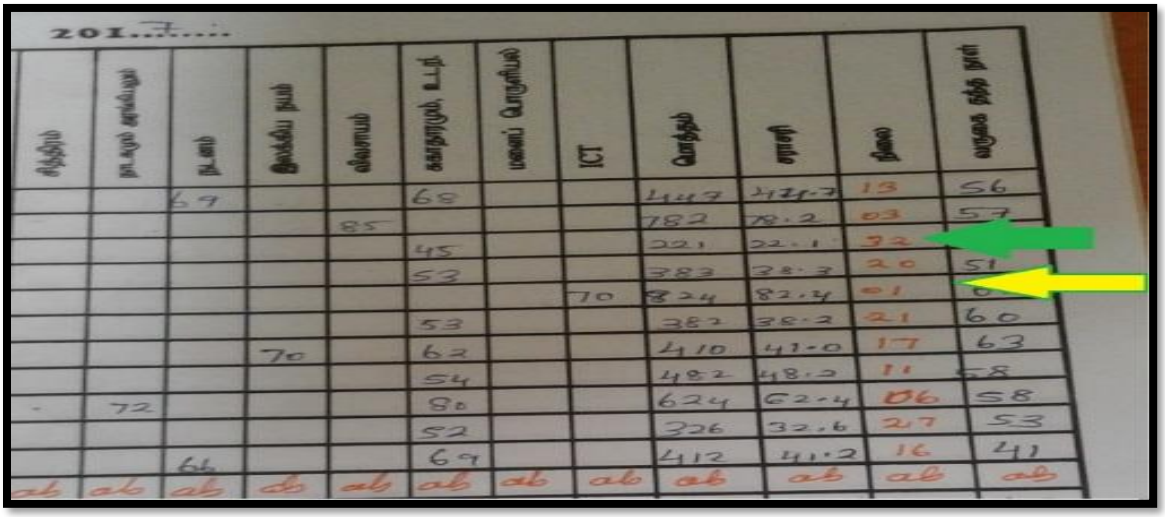


Figure 8: Official Grade Book, 2017

What motivated this unrealistic expectation was the ideology of meritocracy, which created the illusion that students competed in an equal playing field. Ravindran's subjectivity was shaped by a decision he made as the sectional head to alter mobility between ability-tracks. His subjectivity was shaped by the assumption that his decision was fair to all students. The power he wielded in re-ordering of the rules of engagement was intended motivate students, shaping his subjectivity as the adjudicator of motivation and what was considered fair. This attempt to re-order social relationships between students in the various tracks shaped student subjectivities. Consider the following discussion that took place with students in the low-ability tracks. They said:

TH: So, with this upcoming exam, what's the plan?

Vithushan: I want to somehow get out of this group and move up

Thakshila: Sir told us if we do well we will be sent to the top track, so we are working hard

TH: Okay, so in terms of points how does that work?

Vithushan: That's the thing miss, we must get at least 90 points or more for each subject. But right now, my Math scores are 17 (laughs) no matter what I do. I must try harder only, Study, study, study what else? (laughs)

TH: So, are you not working hard now?

Vithushan: Mmmm…I am, but I don't understand what they are teaching sometimes, I can't remember

Thakshila: It is difficult only to get the scores to get out of this track, but we must try isn't it? If teachers come to class maybe….

TH: Yes true, has anyone ever done well and moved to the higher track?

Vithushan: No miss, that's the thing, that's why sir is telling us we must work hard to move out of this group

Thakshila: It's up to us only to do that

Vithushan and Thakshila were motivated to do better based on this re-ordering decision. Although they took up the challenge at face value, they highlight difficulties in obtaining the scores necessary to move up, revealing the conditions they needed to overcome to meet this goal. Yet, they took on the onus of doing well upon themselves. They shaped their own subjectivities as those who try and fail, further reifying the ideology of meritocracy. This is not a function of student naivete but the obscuring of power that mediated subjectivities. Based on re-ordering,

students in each track were positioned as those who were given the choice to move in and out of tracks- but by not being motivated- deserved their current location in which ever track they belonged to. Unwittingly, the students themselves contributed the seeming rationality of the mobility rhetoric based on meritocracy, creating the illusion that the students had the power to make decisions, shaping student subjectivities as decision makers. The co-construction of subjectivities was powerfully mediated by the ideology of meritocracy obscuring the power disparities between teachers and students.

Organizing Learning Supports Teacher and student subjectivities were co-constructed by the ways in which educational supports were organized. Premediated decisions were made, re-organizing the current social structure determining who was to be supported. Consider the following excerpt from my field notes.

> The counseling teacher said that World Vision had done a study to determine how to split the grade eleven group. From divisions D, E, F forty-two students (out of 120) are called the extreme group. It was believed that with more concerted attention they would somehow pass the exam, as they are borderline/average students who are given additional support to make sure the school has good passing scores. Currently about 60 to 85 % of the students fail Ordinary Level exams in this district (Field notes: October 27, 2017).

A collective decision was made between the NGO World Vision and school administrators on whom to support. School processes, especially decisions made by power brokers were viewed as neutral and rational despite excluding students who arguably needed more support, such as extra guidance by teachers. The goal was to support students who were at the border of pass-fail (extreme group) so that they would pass. Notably absent in this discussion were the lowest

performing groups (A and B constituting) that participated in this study. My notes stated:

> In many ways the two lowest groups (A and B) are not taken into consideration. The counselor rightfully said this is the high-drop out group, meaning it was sort of expected that those in the lowest ability groups will drop out anyway before the exam. World Vision compensated teachers who taught the extreme group but did not fund teachers to teach these lowest groups, because they were seen as not worth that kind of investment. A and B group students not only perform poorly academically, have the most number of students without both parents and face most of the financial hardships. Interestingly they are also from areas considers 'low' and problematic (Field Notes: October 27, 2017).

The re-organization of supports were made by power brokers who determined who deserved what kind of 'investment' in improving examination pass rates (at present only 10 to 15% of all the students from this district pass their exams, the second lowest percentage in the country). This decision was not made based on supporting all students but a selected, salvageable few. Students who participated in this study were aware of the extra supports given to their peers in higher-tracked classes but did not know that they were purposely excluded. By re-ordering the ways in which to organized learning supports, student subjectivities were shaped as those who were underserving effectively excluding them.

It was unsettling to note the ways in which even this blatant exclusion was interpreted as a 'pull yourself up from the bootstraps' tactic. Ravindran explained,

> The only way to solve this problem [of not getting extra school support] is that the student also needs to understand this situation [that we can't support everyone]. So, for example if the student is coming from a difficult home background, like a

> drunk father and domestic violence, the student must make up their mind and become determined to learn, they must decide to study. The student must make all the arrangements so that they can study during their free class times. If they know they can't study at home, they must make use of the time in school to get their work done. The child must do it, so for example, that student who was beat up by the father, what she should do is, now the child must understand the reason this way, 'why I and my mother got beat up, the reason for that was me, I am at fault'. If the student realizes that it is her fault, then they will become determined to study. Then the child will try a little more to study.

The student Ravindran described in this incident was punished by the school for obtaining poor grades. Her father and mother were summoned to school and the teachers complained about her performance. As a result, the father beat up her and her mother that night. This student was from one of the groups that extra support was not made available (based on the decision described earlier). Despite not receiving necessary supports, Ravindran still placed the onus of academic success on the student. He went into detail explaining what students like this should do, such as 'making up their mind', 'becoming determined to learn' and so on. Ravindran's subjectivity was shaped as the problem-solver, capable of telling the student what she needed to do in response to not receiving support. In doing so, he constructed the student's subjectivity as having complete control over her lived realties stating, 'the child must do it' that would give her agentic resistance to reshape her own subjectivity (Puar, 2013).

Bureaucratic management actions have immense social stratification outcomes. One of the outcomes in relation to co-constructing subjectivities was persuading teachers to think of the decision making as a management activity which masks its social implications to the decision

makers and the enforcers creating justifications to participate in doing them. The co-construction of subjectivities was powerfully mediated by re-organizing school social structures which co-constructed student and teacher subjectivities. The obscuring of power and politics that shaped these co-constructions positioned students in unfavorable ways, while leaving the power disparities that maintained oppressive, inequitable systems intact.

Co-construction of Subjectivities: Interpreting War Disruptions

In this section I attended to the ways in which subjectivities were co-constructed in relation to shared experiences. Shared experiences shaped the co-construction of subjectivities in indeterminate ways. Indeterminacy resists positioning those who share similar experiences and navigate similar intersectionalities as sharing analogous subjectivities. Subjectivities co-constructed in relation to other subjectivities resists stereotyping and constructing normative constructions of people a-priori (Lewis & Mills, 2003; Mohanty, 2003).

Teachers and students shared similar experiences that impacted their educational trajectories and intersecting subjectivities. For example, displacement during war disrupted education trajectories of students and teachers who participated in this study. Instead of attending 12 years of consecutive schooling, students and teachers may have attended partial school years, missed a year or two of school, and then, rejoined a school community in another part of the country. They lost the flow of a sequenced curriculum, relationships with teachers over time, the development of sustained approaches to learning and studying, and lost critical periods of time to practice and retain specific skills. However, subjectivities were co-constructed in relation to war-related events by divergent interpretations. Although these experiences were shared, the ways in which they co-constructed teachers and student subjectivities took interesting turns. These turns that constituted (re)interpretation by teachers was a function of relational power they wielded in

schools demonstrating the ways in which power dynamics shape the co-construction of subjectivities. For example, teachers understood their own subjectivities in relation to the war negatively due to experiencing poverty, displacement, and deaths. Even though their students experienced similar realities, teachers positioned student experiences as less negative in comparison to their own. I begin by sharing what teachers experienced as students. Then I explain how teachers viewed their students' experiences in relation to their own experiences.

Teacher Interpretations of War Disruptions Teachers experienced displacement when they were students. Anojan explicated how displacement impacted him a student. He said,

> When I was a student, we became displaced and moved a lot. Those days there were problems due to the war. We were displaced, and we had no resources at all. We were displaced and living in a school at the time, that's where we had to stay. Teachers wouldn't come to teach in the camp because it was difficult to travel all the way there. I couldn't study for that exam at all, I didn't study at all. When you are displaced, nothing education related gets priority.

Anojan explained how becoming displaced and living in refugee camps impacted his learning. He pointed out that education was not given priority in camps. He mentioned that some teaching took place, but it was inadequate. Three of the teachers in this study were displaced multiple times when they were students. Bhavani's experiences highlighted the difficulties she faced as a student, where her education was disrupted multiple times, where even food was scarce. Ravindran explained how he studied for his Advanced Level exam at the peak of intense combat and noted that 'getting attacked while trying to study was significant problem'. Revathi was not displaced but described how displacement impacted her nonetheless. She said,

> Class sizes reduced when people moved away. Then, there was a dearth of

> teachers because our teachers left as well. Finding teachers to replace these groups were very tough. If my friend did not move away, I wonder if I could have done well and studied well. She came here to this area she got caught to the war and died.

Revathi traced her experiences from primary school up to her advanced level exams, describing how war impacted her education experiences at every level in different ways. For example, in grade three class sizes reduced and there was a dearth of teachers. In her advanced level grades, she experienced the death of a friend who had been a great resource in helping her prepare for the exam. These experiences shaped Revathi's subjectivity as a student whose education was negatively impacted by the war. By stating that she 'could have done really well and studied well' if her friend was still alive indicated that her true potential for doing well was impeded by these events, highlighting how this death profoundly impacted her life trajectory. She explained these realities to me, situating her own subjectivity, co-constructing herself someone who had the potential to do better in schools (indicating her aptitude) if not for war-time experiences.

The impact of multiple displacements was evident in teacher journey maps. Anojan mapped the first five years of his schooling trajectory this way.

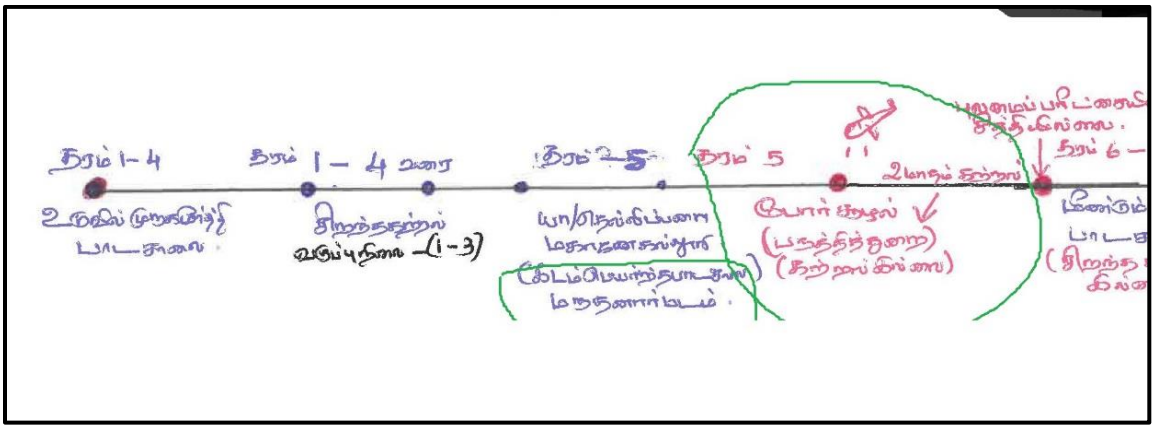


Figure 9: Anojan Journey Map

In this image (see Figure 9), Anojan used colors to show how his education trajectory became profoundly disrupted when the war began. Red signified danger. The image showed aerial bombing and his comment at the bottom noted, “war was going on, displaced, no education”. Teachers shared many difficult experiences that resulted due to war disruptions such as falling behind in their education, poor performance during exams and poverty. Teachers used these experiences to construct their own subjectivities as victims and agents. Teachers repeatedly shared how war disruptions impeded their learning, simultaneously positioning themselves as those who successfully overcame war related disruptions.

While teachers shared similar war related experiences it did not shape their subjectivities in the same way. In fact, Ravindran viewed displacement as an experience that positively impacted his life trajectory. As such, the ways in which displacement co-constructed his subjectivity as a student had a positive valence. He said,

> Displacement has its pro’s and con’s, but in my case, it was a positive experience overall. When we became displaced and came here, then a context where we could study and become educated opened up. An environment to study was created for us, because we got displaced. People got displaced and people from Jaffna came to our schools. Lots of students joined and teachers joined the school. They were into education in a big way. It was then that we also realized the value of education. The competition helped create that type of mindset in us as well. If not, we would be herding cows by now in our village.

Before becoming displaced Ravindran lived in a rural village where his school was profoundly under resourced. It was a one room school where grades one to five were taught together by one teacher and one principal. Together the school had less than 50 students.

Displacement created opportunities for him to pursue higher education. If he had not been displaced he would have had to leave his village after grade 5 to continue his education or drop-out. He said, “if not for displacement, my life would be just watering the fields and herding cows”. Thus, his experience shaped his subjectivity in ways that supported his life trajectory toward becoming a teacher. Ravindran positioned himself as a beneficiary and the impact of displacement on his own subjectivity in positive ways. He pointed out an important aspect of the co-construction of subjectivities, where common experiences per se do determine the types of subjectivities one owns and resists. Indicating how subject formation was indeed situated in context, where similar experiences did not necessarily produce the same subjectivities (Lewis & Mills, 2003).

Ravindran’s experiences can be compared to Bhavani’s experiences which were more typical of the ways in which teachers shared the ways in which war disruptions shaped their subjectivities. Bhavani did not view displacement as positive, however, she explained how her education was not profoundly impacted due to the war. She said,

> Ah! my education did not get impacted in a big way. But I was displaced twice. It was in 96’, I was in grade three. In the big displacement happened, at that time we couldn’t go to schools or anything. But you know I did not miss out too much because my mother didn’t let us get affected. She taught us at home every single day.

Bhavani’s mother was a teacher. She explained although her schooling was disrupted her learning experiences were salvaged due to her mother not letting them get ‘affected’, by teaching her and her three siblings ‘every single day’. Bhavani’s subjectivities in relation to displacement was shaped by her mother’s ability to teach. Bhavani pointed out that even though she lost social

and educational opportunities that schools offered, it wasn't so bad because her mother was able offer her necessary supports that helped her stay on top of her education. This is another important way how similar experience did not shape subjectivities in the same way. For Bhavani, the intellectual capital her mother possessed and shared mitigated the negative ways in which war disruptions could have shaped her subjectivity as a learner. These experiences Ravindran and Bhavani shared showed the ways in which one's social location and access to social, cultural capital shaped subjectivities in dissimilar ways.

Teachers Interpreting Student Experiences War-related experiences shaped teacher and student subjectivities differentially. The ways in which the co-construction of subjectivities took place became evident when teachers positioned their students' subjectivities in relation to shared experiences. They constructed these subjectivities by comparing groups of students and impact time lines.

Comparing peer experiences. While teachers had their own first-hand responses to of the impact of war, their interpretations of the war's impact on their students was obtuse. For example, Ravindran responded to whether the war impacted students' learning in negative ways:

> The war is not an excuse. No way, that's not the reason at all for poor performance. During the war, well if it was due to the war, then we would not have got some of the good results in this school, we have been getting some good results so far. We would not have gotten those good results if the war had impacted students learning.

Ravindran refused to accept the impact of the war on student learning. He reasoned that this was not possible, because some students were able to excel in exams even after the war. He failed to mention that students in school experienced the war in different ways, making his claim that war

was an ‘excuse’ for poor performance suspect. Most students in the high ability tracked groups did not witness the brutalities of war because they had social and cultural capital to relocate just as war intensified in 2006. If family members had government jobs or had relatives in larger cities, they were given permission to leave combat areas or limit their stay in displacement camps.

In comparison, many of the students in the low-ability tracked groups and their families bore the brunt of war. During the final phase of the war that ended in 2009, children in these areas lacked food, water and medication and were at high-risk of malnutrition and disease. They experienced the highest number of forced recruitment into combat, civilian deaths (30% of children being causalities of landmines) and the highest number of war related injuries (Hart, 2015). Therefore, by the time the war was over, the students in this school had experienced war atrocities in different ways. As a result, many of the students, especially those in low ability-tracked groups faced multiple challenges. Anojan described,

> In this last war, the displacement was something different altogether, not like what we went through those days. Of the ones who stayed behind in this area, one thing is that so many children were killed, we lost so many children. Then so many parents were killed too, an unbelievable amount. How can our students recover from all these experiences just because the war is over right?

Anojan described the experiences of ‘who stayed behind’. Toward the end of the war, the rebel group refused to let them flee for safety holding these people as human shields. The State army on the other side shot and bombed people indiscriminately when they escaped to areas were declared safe zones (Weiss, 2012). Anojan continued to explain how war brutalities impacted his students today:

> That child's mothers' is disabled, her hands and legs are completely gone. She is paralyzed. He takes care of the mother as well. He is her caretaker. This child had no brothers either, and no father. He bathes and feeds her, all this while coming to school. Yes, he takes care of the mother while coming to school.

The student Anojan mentioned was his mother's only caretaker. Her paralysis was due to a shrapnel injury to the brain caused during the war. The student Anojan described experienced the war in ways that were very different to his peers in the high-ability tracked group. Students in the top group were typically described as having ample resources such as parents with regular jobs, and as those who only returned to this area two years after the war ended. This somewhat explains their ability to excel despite the war, co-constructing student subjectivities in relation to their peers in divergent ways.

Comparing impact timelines. Teachers interpreted their students' experiences based on their understanding of displacement timelines and how it did or did not impact students' education timelines. Given that most of the students in this study experienced the war in their primary grades, when Revathi was asked if these learning disruptions in primary grades could have impacted students' current performance she explained,

> These ones in the lower divisions, they would have missed learning grade 3 and 4 maybe even 5. But even if they missed those years, they should have been able to keep up with the grades that came later right? I mean, they got through the scholarship exams. Which means the war might not be the reason they are struggling in school.

Revathi recognized that the war disrupted schooling during grades three to five. But she reasoned that this disruption may not be the reason students are struggling. She assumed that all the

students who she currently taught passed the grade five scholarship exam, which she presented as evidence that their education could not have been disrupted. However, most of students she currently taught did not pass the scholarship exam. Students remained in school due to schools being obligated to retain students in school until they are in grade nine (14 years) due to the National compulsory schooling law. She continued rationalizing why missing basics would not have impacted students. She said,

> Even if they missed those first years, they should have been able to catch up at least half of the information they missed isn't it? Not the very basic but the rest you know the rest? As far as I know, teachers in grade six teach some of the basics before they teach their current lessons. So, these ones in the lower divisions, though they would have missed grade three and four during the war they should have been able to keep up with the grades that came later.

Revathi pointed out the many ways in which teacher's remedied missed skills. As a result, she expected that students should be able to perform well in school. It was not possible to verify if teachers in grade 6 taught basics, however a brief look at the grade six curriculum showed no evidence of teaching basic skills. The following excerpt from the published curriculum[4] stated:

> The mathematics syllabus has been prepared not only with the objective of inculcating knowledge and skills but also to highlight deeper aims of communication, relationships, logical arguments, and problem solving, the latterly

[4] The curriculum is set for the whole country. There are no accommodations made for students who are in war-affected areas because the National examination expects all the students to compete at the same level.

> mentioned four aims aid more effectively the development of behavioral and thinking skills (Grade 6_ Math Syllabus, National Institute of Education Sri Lanka).

Example lessons included the following; Analyze the likelihood of an even occurring to predict future events (Competency-31), Makes decisions regarding day to day activities based on geometrical concepts related to rectilinear plane figures (Competency -23) and Makes use of a limited space in an optimal manner by investigating the area (Competancy-8). None of these competencies suggested basics were taught. Instead it showed students needed to know their basics to acquire these competencies. I show this example to point out that Revathi like all the teachers in this study have not taught any grade below grade nine. The assumption that basics were taught in grade six may have resulted from lack of exposure. Thus, teachers insisting that students should be able to catch up even if they missed their basics due to the war, shaped the ways in which they constructed student subjectivities. Student subjectivities were shaped as those who were given multiple opportunities after the war to catch-up on what they missed, positioning their struggles as self-inflicted.

Teacher Interpretations of Post-war Realities Like the students in this study, the four focal teachers faced tremendous challenges due to poverty when active combat subsided. Ravindran recounted, “as far as I can remember, when I was doing my Advanced Level exams, there was no electricity in our areas.” By the time he was doing his Advanced Level examination Ravindran had moved to a place where there were secondary schools. Despite moving from a rural area, the level of poverty he experienced did not improve. He went on to say that “in fact I didn't even know what electricity was. Our village was so poor, we didn't even have a light bulb to help us study at night.” Poverty shaped Ravindran’s subjectivity as a

student, where poverty shaped his learning experiences, highlighting the tremendous hardships he faced while studying for his Advanced Level Exams, the exam that determined his entrance into university and future job prospects.

Anojan described the ways in which the poverty in his family impacted his school experiences after the war. Like many of his students at present, Anojan was on the verge of dropping out of school due to poverty, "my home situation that was extremely challenging and difficult. Life was tough at home. We were very poor." Then, he described his family's post-war poverty, "after the war things got worse. We lost even the little money we had, and then situation at home got worse. We even lost our home and had no place to live. We couldn't survive." Food deprivation was constant, "we used to worry about what to eat. There were days we didn't know how to find food." Work was constant and under strenuous conditions, "we were desperately poor. We used to wake up early, go to the field, and work on the land before we went to school each day. There were days I used to stay overnight and sleep in the field with my father overseeing the crops." Because of their circumstances, Anojan's father needed his help, "it was after we finished all the work, sometimes by seven in the morning that our father lets us go to school late. He wanted me to drop-out because of our financial situation." These experiences shaped Anojan's subjectivity as a student.

Teacher Interpretation of Student Experiences Like Anojan, teachers in this study were aware of the ways in which poverty impacted their students, especially those in the low-ability tracked groups. In describing his students Anojan said,

> My students in these low divisions, they have no resources to study, no support at all. Half of them can't afford anything, even food. These children have terrible financial difficulties. Sometimes, children say that they want to take the food

> home because there are people at home, especially young children who are hungry.

Anojan described how some of his students were hungry in school due to poverty. The World Food Program is an organization that provided food to low income students in this school. Anojan was the teacher in charge of this project considering most of his students benefited from this project. As he described, hunger was common due to most of his students' care takers being extremely poor due to limited employment opportunities. The area in which this school was situated was the poorest area in the entire country (Census of Population and Housing 2012/13), where closer to 30% of household incomes fell far below the absolute poverty line[5] (rupees 1,400, which is less than one dollar of total expenditure per person per month). Anojan continued,

> I asked, and I figured out Mukunthan's problem. When I asked him why he was leaving school to go and paint houses, he said that he is the one who must cook at home, he said his mother lives abroad. The father goes to work and comes by 7 or 8 in the night, so he goes home every day and cooks for himself and his younger brothers. That's why he doesn't come to school often, he has to take care of the small kids. He manages the entire household.

It turned out that Mukunthan's problem was due to poverty. This student's mother lived in the Middle East, working as a maid. The father worked in construction and was rarely at home.

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[5] "Absolute poverty is perceived as subsistence below the minimum requirements for physical well-being" (Chronic Poverty Research Centre, 2001).

Although there seemed to be a steady income, Mukunthan worked odd jobs. Children contributing to household income was common occurrence in these areas. Poverty dismantled traditional family structures making Mukunthan the primary caretaker of his three younger siblings. As a result, Mukunthan missed school.

Despite being aware of these realities, teachers interpreted student subjectivities as those using poverty as an 'excuse' for poor performance, evading their learning responsibilities. Anojan explained,

> This child hasn't been coming to school for a while. When I asked him why that was, the child said that he had financial difficulties at home, that he can't ask for money from his parents. So, I called the mother and asked her what was going on, she said although they are struggling financially the child has no problems in pursuing his education, because they do everything to make sure he goes to school, and they let him focus on his school work. So, there is no excuse really for this student to drop out.

Anojan pointed out that despite high levels of poverty at home, the students had no excuse for not attending to their school work. Although, public school is free, families incur other expenses such as transport and school supplies, all of which are relatively more expensive in these areas due to the slow development of public services. In addition, welfare supports have been cut down significantly in response to austerity, because of an IMF extended Fund Facility that required the reduction of welfare expenditure (Weerakoon, 2017). It was common for students who were old enough (roughly age 10 and above) to contribute to household income, partially explaining the high school drop-out rate of 63% per year (Perera, 2012).

While parents may have the best intentions, their circumstances might warrant children to

contribute to the household income, which suggests that poverty is not an ‘excuse’ the student use to drop-out of school. Interestingly, the threat of dropping out of was eminent in Anojan’s own subjectivity as a student. Perhaps because he did not succumb to the pressures of dropping out, he positioned his students as using poverty as an excuse. This implied student weakness based on poor decision making. Having worked hard to succeed, teachers like Anojan expected their own students to do the same. Teachers’ own subjectivity shaped their world view of what students should do and how they should surmount hardship.

In this case, it was not the similar experiences of structural constraints like poverty, but the ways in which individuals responded in relation to these experiences that shaped the co-construction of subjectivities.

Teachers constructed student subjectivities in relation to their realities as being comparatively far worse. For example, teachers viewed current post-war conditions as favorable to students’ education, in comparison to what they had experienced. Revathi said,

> After the war, now many educational resources are available everywhere for these students. When we returned to school [after the war], we only got an exam at the end of the term that’s it. In between we didn’t have exams or nothing like that at all. We didn’t have any of those facilities. Other than that, here for example lots of organizations come here and conduct seminars, many different types of people from different organizations come and give advice to students, we didn’t have any such resources at all. All we had was what the teacher taught us in the class, that was it.

Revathi explained how students in schools at present were given multiple resources in improving their academic standing. She listed resources students currently have at their disposal such as

multiple model exams, tutorials, seminars, and exam related advice. She contended that these are ‘extra’ resources that were made available to students, which she had no access to, meant that her students were at an advantage. She stated that if she had been given the same opportunities when she was a student, she would have done better. She noted the prevalence of resources meant that students had ‘no excuse to perform poorly’. The mere presence of additional resources shaped how subjectivities were co-constructed. Access to these resources were severely limited for students in low-ability tracked groups. She constructed her subjectivity as someone who could have done better if the additional resources were made available to her. This constructed her students’ subjectivities as those not taking advantage of these resources. This resulted in positioning students as those who were better off than herself, implying that their current struggles were somewhat self-inflicted. Here, the co-construction of subjectivities was a consequence of comparing material resources at face-value without deeper interrogation as to the multiple ways in which resources are were equitably distributed in the school.

Bhavani agreed, describing students currently had supports in the community to compensate for poverty. She said,

> Even if they are poor, now today, there are many NGO’s, and individuals and they all help students, both financially or if not in some other way they keep supporting these people. So then in that case, they have no real obstacles in studying and educating themselves anymore. I don't think they have any major financial problems anymore, like we had in those days.

Bhavani extended her analysis by pointing out that the schools were better resourced. She claimed that even though students lived in poverty, there were multiple supports available to them. The heavy presence of NGOs in this area might have caused Bhavani to think that

resources are readily available. However, research conducted in these areas show that NGOs are not able to meet the demands of people in efficient ways due to competing demands that required significant trade-offs in how support was distributed (Walton, 2008). The distribution of resources was not equitable due to political and socio-cultural constraints placed upon NGOs that must adhere to MOUs[6] with local authorities. By comparing their own experiences to students' current experiences teachers constructed student subjectivities in ways that positioned students as experiencing better lives. While teacher experiences of poverty had similar undertones, teachers often positioned their students as using poverty as an excuse, shaping student subjectivities in ways that devalued student's lived realities constrained by poverty.

Predictably, these co-constructed subjectivities resulted in teachers placing the onus of contending with poverty on students, highlighting another way in which subjectivities were co-constructed in relation to poverty. Revathi said,

> So, for those students who are struggling with academics, the ones who are very poor you know, they must understand that only if they study can they escape from their current conditions, the ones who study even though they are in difficult life situations they know this already. These difficult situations and their poverty must motivate them to do better isn't it? Because they don't have another escape.

Revathi recognized that poverty influenced student subjectivities. Therefore, it was not an outright denial of these realities that constructed student subjectivities; rather it was the

[6] MOU's are memoranda of understanding, where local and state authorities share decision making power in the distribution of resources.

interpretation of these realities that positioned students as having the power to remedy these constraints. She constructed student subjectivities by dislocating power relations in ways that created the illusion that students could control their subjectivities and 'escape' their realities. I am not arguing that the students lacked agency in shaping their own subjectivities. Rather what I point out is how teachers positioned themselves as those who did not have power over their own poverty as students while 'they' the students were constructed as those who had power to alter their realities. As such re-interpretation of similar experiences animated the ways in which subjectivities were co-constructed.

Co-construction of Subjectivities: Interpreting Student-Teacher Activities

How teachers and students perceived one another resulted in conflictual participation in activities shaping subjectivities in culturally specific ways. In this section I discuss the ways in which teachers experienced teaching practices as students. While these practices profoundly shaped their learner subjectivities, I show how these experiences coalesced and colluded indeterminately when constructing their students' subjectivities.

Learner Status: Academic Performance In the following quotes teachers shared the ways in which they positioned themselves as students. They articulated their own learner subjectivities based on educational performance. Three patterns were evident in these descriptions. First, all four teachers' academic performance was at the average to above average range. All four focal teachers passed their examinations and went on to pursue tertiary education. Anojan said explained his academic status saying, "I was never top of the class or anything like that. I used to be an average student". Teachers also discussed the relative nature of their academic standing, based on education resources. Ravindran said,

I was a top student. It was a relative thing. Although we were top in our school, because

> we had no extra resources like tuition, if you compare us with those who had these facilities we were at a low standard.

Revathi said, “even though I did average work I used to be a good student, I was good in sports” while Bhavani noted, “I was generally above average, a good student, an all-rounder, drama, music all that”. The ways in which teachers talked about their subjectivities were nuanced explaining the complexities that rendered how their learner subjectivities were formed. For instance, they highlighted that their subjectivities as learners were not just constrained to their academic performance as judged by grades alone. Ravindran remarked that it was relative to the resources made available to him. I point out this complexity to show the indeterminacy that occurred as teachers failed to invoke the same complexity when constructing subjectivities of their students.

When teachers were asked to describe their students, the profiles of their students’ subjectivities were reduced to single-issue reasoning (Lorde, 2012). Anojan said, “I have the lowest performing students, meaning there are no students who do really well getting high marks in my class. The class average is only 18 points out of 100”. Anojan described his students based on their low scores, while Bhavani pointed out their attitude saying, “they don’t have the right mentality, not having that is one reason avoid studies obviously that becomes a huge failure during their exam.” Although Ravindran described that his academic standing was relative to resources, when describing his students, he said, “their poor grades mean they don't care about their work at all. The student must care for their education, they just don't, so getting poor marks is inevitable”.

Two factors stand in contrast to how teachers viewed themselves as learners. First, teachers highlighted that most of the students they taught were low-achievers, that they were

below- average students mostly with reference to examination grades. There was very little reference to the context in which these students were positioned as poor learners, considering only 10 to 15% of students who sit for the Ordinary Level exam in this region met minimal competency standards (Northern Education System Review, 2014). The context-based relativities that shaped academic performance teachers used to describe their own subjectivities was conspicuously absent when constructing student subjectivities. In fact, they disregarded contextual features and instead emphasized how students avoided work and did not care. These subjective positionings caused teacher to view their students in ways that were often negative in comparison to how they viewed themselves as students.

Problematic Teaching Activities and the Co-construction of Subjectivities Like many of the students in this study, as students, teachers had experienced problematic teaching. Teachers recognized how problematic instructional practices they experienced impacted their ability to learn and excel in school. Ravindran explained,

> The Math sir I had, he asked us if we understood a concept? And if we say no, oh we didn't understand this, then he asked us, what didn't you understand in this, and then of course we become afraid. The reason we asked him in the first place is because we didn't understand what he said the first time isn't it? Then we become terrified. That was the problem we faced. Then we get afraid of him we don't speak up, we stay quietly and then he hits us for that. So that was, to be honest, his behavior caused us to hate that subject. That was a reason we hated that subject and did badly in it.

Ravindran pointed our several problems in his teacher's instructional practices. The teacher's explanations were inadequate. In seeking to explain better, the teacher employed a strategy that

made him ‘terrified’. Asking the teacher questions for further clarification was not helpful to him, causing him to struggle. This resulted in Ravindran performing poorly in Math. Revathi shared a similar experience. She said,

> The other thing is during my A/L I had a bad experience in school. There was a Chemistry teacher who taught us. This sir who came half way when school was already in session and he said that he will not do any practical classes for us. He refused to teach practical classes. He said he would not do practical’s because he did not have all the resources, so he just refused to do it. But this was important for our exams isn’t it?

Revathi emphasized how the teacher refused to teach practicals. Practical work was an important component of Advanced Level chemistry courses, as the examination and pre-examination requirements insisted students obtained adequate lab experiences. She highlighted that her teacher refused to teach because of the lack of resources in the lab which was common in rural schools. Her teachers’ refusal indicated the power he held in deciding access to what she and her colleagues learned. Revathi emphasized his refusal, pointing out the ways in which this teacher used his power shape her subjectivity as a student who became helpless, indicated by her rhetorical question at the end ‘but this was important for our exams isn’t it?’.
Revathi and Ravindran shared experiences of teachers who taught in ways that shaped their student subjectivities in harmful ways.

I compare these two examples with the ways in which teachers in this study positioned their students’ subjectivities in relation to their instructional practices. Ravindran was known to use excessive violence while teaching. When he was asked if his use of fierce force impacted student learning he said,

> When it comes to asking me questions, no matter how many times they want they can ask me to repeat it. But if they don't ask and keep quiet when they don't understand, and they don't do their work because of it then that becomes a problem. For this I admit that they get in trouble. I told them, you can ask me questions repeatedly as many times as you want, but if you don't show me you have been listening and tell me what you don't understand then I will punish them.

Ravindran explained how he encouraged questions from his students, but there were several conditions that had to be met that seemed similar to the experience he had with his own teacher. For instance, he said that the students must ask questions in ways that showed him that they have paid attention. Like his own teacher, he expected students to have a good understanding of what it was that they didn't understand. This peculiarity was demanded of him, and now he expected this of his students, who like him were "terrified." His students often complained that they were too afraid of Ravindran to ask questions. For example, Sailaja said "we are terrified of him, we don't ask questions because we are afraid." Interestingly, at this point in the study Ravindran did not recognize the parallels between these instructional methods. He constructed his own teacher as unreasonable, positioning himself as a student who was negatively impacted in by his teachers' activities. Yet, in constructing his students' subjectivities he elided the similarity by positioning himself as a teacher who was willing to answer questions, this in turn co-constructed his students as those who were not paying attention.

These types of incongruities were common in the ways in which teachers interpreted their activities in relation to their students. Revathi shared an experience where she deliberately omitted teaching student's certain concepts, she said,

> I decide based on what the student needs. Some of them, you know they are at a

> very low level in their learning, so I don't teach certain parts. Instead of teaching them complex concepts like probability, I decided that it is more useful to teach them something simple like subtraction.

Revathi emphasized how she unilaterally decided what to teach and what not to teach her students. Although this example does not suggest outright refusal to teach, in a less obvious way, Revathi made choices that made her students lose access to content. Even though she knew that 'probability' was tested at the examination, she chose to teach subtraction based on her opinion on what was more 'useful' to the students.

Akin to her chemistry teacher, this too was refusal to teach in a backhanded way, especially when considering how this impacted students. Her students continuously complained what she taught in class never showed up in the exam. For example, Mauryan said, "but the sums they explain to us in class, they don't really come in the exam, exam questions are difficult". Revathi's decision to not teach as opposed to refusing to teach is an irrelevant distinction, for it put her students in the same dilemma she was in as a student. In other words, her students were also pointed out not having access to content that was important for the exam. In this example, she co-constructed her teacher subjectivity as someone who made unilateral decisions about what was useful to her students, while positioning students as those who deserved such treatment. Students on the other hand positioned themselves as those whose struggles were predicated on decisions teachers made, constructing their teacher as insensitive or unaware of examination demands placed upon them. Despite sharing similar adverse teaching experiences as students, teachers in this study co-constructed their teacher subjectivities in ways that engendered similar problematic experiences for their students, producing student subjectivities that were shaped by less than ideal teaching practices.

Meaningful Teaching and the Co-construction of Subjectivities Teachers experienced meaningful teaching practices that shaped their subjectivities as students. In the following section I point out the ways in which these experiences became skewed in shaping the subjectivities of their own students. Teachers specifically referred to their own positive learning experiences and how it shaped their current teaching practices, accentuating the ways in which the co-construction of subjectivities are produced in practice (Holland & Lave, 2001). Revathi shared her experiences,

> As for teachers in my experience (according to me), my role model was my Math teacher. Regardless of if you understood the first time or not she explained the sums again to everyone in the class. Even after that, if we individually stand up and ask her to explain it, she won't hesitate at all.

Revathi appreciated her Math teacher because of her wiliness to teach students repeatedly ensuring they understood concepts. In doing so her teacher accommodated students' needs. Revathi continued,

> She used to have her view, but she used to change the way she explained using different sway. She used to let us explain how we see the problem or the sum, and as we are explaining it to her, she caught the place we are faltering and then she used that to teach us the right way to do it. Instead of making us see the problem the way she sees it, she explained the sum the way we see it.

Revathi pointed out several attributes of her Math teacher and her teaching practices that made learning meaningful. Her teacher was willing to teach students repeatedly until students understood the content. Her teacher patiently listened to the student's answers to determine why they were faltering and modified her explanations to ensure students understood. In contrast,

Revathi described her own teaching this way,

> When I teach, I explain what is going on. So, when I am explaining something to a student I keep explaining it my way, in my own view, the right way. I expect the student to understand the sum in the way I view the sum, right? That's what we expect from students.

Revathi specified how she worked hard to make the student see the sum her way. As such, Revathi's own subjectivity as a leaner who experienced good teaching did not transfer into her teacher subjectivity. She expected her students to conform to her way of thinking. While she positioned her teacher as responsive and flexible, Revathi positioned her own teacher activities as inflexible, demanding student conformity. Mere exposure to good teaching did not shape teacher subjectivities in ways that engendered good teaching practices. Unlike her own teacher who trusted her students to give meaningful feedback (co-constructing teacher-student subjectivities), Revathi's relationship with her students were shaped by co-constructing subjectivities where she positioned herself as knowing 'the way', the knower, while constructing her students' subjectivities as those who must conform because of not knowing the 'right way' of learning content.

In the same way Bhavani, appreciated one of her own teachers who conducted practical activities. She said,

> That teacher was a retired teacher, when I was in school he was about 70 years old. When he taught it was not just teaching the content, he would create a comfort zone before he teaches, or we would play a game or do fun learning activities. The fun activities helped us remember what he taught us. I was a good student anyway also and with all sir did, I did very well the exam.

It was clear that Bhavani enjoyed being taught by this teacher. In bringing up his age and retired status she implied that he had been invited back to the school because he was a good teacher. She also explained engaging in activities created a 'comfort zone,' where her teacher made sure that the environment was conducive to learning. Bhavani noted that her teachers' actions ensured that they remembered the lessons he taught. The atmosphere in which learning took place that the co-construction of teacher-student subjectivities were premised on joy, comfortableness, and mutual learner-teacher competence. Bhavani positioned her student subjectivity was one who deserved good teaching because she 'was a good student', and her teacher as one who was capable improving her academic performance.

Conversely, in the following excerpt Bhavani described how she omitted activities when teaching students in the low ability-tracked groups. She said,

> I wonder how I can get these students involved in a group activity or some fun activities, because if I do it they will totally fail. Their academic level is so low. I think if I try something active in that [low-ability tracked] class, I think they will fail in the activity because they won't participate fully.

In this instance, Bhavani justified not using activities with students in low-ability tracked groups. Despite being a proponent of conducting 'fun activities' for students in high-ability tracked groups, she decided that 'activities' would 'totally fail' for this group of students. This showed that teachers determined how to engage in teaching based on how they positioned students, despite knowing the advantages of using active instructional methods.

Contrary to Bhavani's rationale, the students enjoyed classroom-based activities and found them useful in understanding lessons. Mathan stated,

> Sometimes teacher takes us to the activity room and teaches lessons there, it helps

> concentrate on the lessons, if not just notes are boring we feel sleepy. Then we start talking to other students, some distraction you know (laugh), then we get scolded for that. Group work is fun, you know. But we are not taken there much, in fact, we were not taken to the activity room at all this term. Those ones [students in higher-ability tracked groups] are taken there every Friday.

Mathan described how activity-based learning was helpful in paying attention in the classroom. He pointed out that chalk and talk, (a term Bhavani used to explain teaching activities that entailed non-activity-based teaching) was boring and it impeded his ability to understand. He clearly appreciated trips to the activity room and pointed out how students in the low ability-tracked groups were not given these opportunities. In this case, the co-construction of subjectivities occurred by Bhavani identifying herself as a good student and applying teaching strategies as meant only for those she viewed good students in her own teaching. Co-constructing subjectivities were based on how teacher interpreted their own student experiences in relation to their teaching activities, often predicated on how they viewed student subjectivities in relation to academic competence.

Co-construction of Subjectivities: Teacher-Student Relationships

Like teaching activities, the nature of student, teacher relationships mediated the co-construction of subjectivities. These relationships shaped their subjectivities as students in important ways.

Friendliness and Approachability In the following excerpts teachers shared the nature of student-teacher relationships they experienced as students. Ravindran said,

> My teacher was a very good guide, he would share his experiences, how he went to University and how that was like. He was also a village man, from our village,

> so he was also born in a very rural village like us. He would tell us his story. Most of the good teachers started sharing their experiences with us a little before the lesson began. If we make some kind of mistake, they would talk to us about those things calmly.

Revathi explained how her teacher interacted with students. She said,

> As for teachers, my role model was the Math teacher who taught me. She interacted with us like a friend. Though she treated us like friends and was friendly, she did not act carelessly as she kept her distance as a teacher. Just because of being friends we couldn't treat her or talk to her the way we wanted to, she maintained her status as a teacher, but she was friendly in the way she interacted with us.

Three salient features that constructed their own subjectivities as students were evident. First, their teachers were friendly and approachable. Their teachers showed kindness in meaningful actions like sharing their experiences and supporting them when in ways that helped them become successful. Thirdly, teachers recognized how the nature of relationships their teachers build with them shaped their student subjectivities in ways that improved their life trajectories. For instance, Anojan noted that his teachers supportiveness 'was the most significant contribution' in his learning. As a result, the four focal teachers in this study had experienced these positive relationships with their teachers that in many ways shaped their life trajectories and as such their subjectivities.

Teachers in this study pursued distinctly different ways in which they built relationships with their students. In describing how she approached her students Revathi said,

> So sometimes we can be their friends, that can happen, but inside the school if we do that

> then student thinks too highly of themselves. I think I shouldn't be like this you know friends with students. No matter how much students scold us for being harsh I really don't care if students think poorly of me, I am thinking about how this can help the child in the end. That is my focus, I am not interested in what they think of me.

Revathi explained how she wanted to be viewed by her students. She made distinct remarks about what she would like students to think of her and what aspects of the student's opinion did not matter to her. By building these expectations she shaped her own subjectivity as a good teacher who did not want to be friendly. As a result, she found that being harsh was justified because her goal was to guide students in the 'correct direction and 'make them good people'. In co-constructing subjectivities, she made multiple maneuvers in the field of relational power that position her as a good teacher and her students as those who needed to be 'made good', implying that they were bad and were going in the wrong direction.

As a student Revathi appreciated her teacher's ability to be friendly, while she decided to maintain a 'teacher-student distance' that justified being harsh. In other words, when it came to building relationships with her own students, she did not center connection, rather she centered the need 'to make them good people'. Like Revathi, the focal teachers in this study often stated the necessity of not being 'friendly' with students, while the students on the other hand appreciated these attributes in teachers. They said,

> Silajah: The teacher who is good can explain lessons very well they are able to do that in nice ways, they interact with us in friendly ways.
>
> Mathan: Sometimes in class he comes and sits next to us and talks to us, he is friendly and gives us good advice, He is very friendly and is always telling us that we can do well.

In these focus groups, students shared how teachers' friendliness supported their ability to learn in classrooms. They highlight friendly teachers 'explain lessons very well' and were able to do this in 'nice ways'. According to the students, these teachers were also encouraging and gave 'good advice'. What is important to note here is that being friendly was not something that students appreciated at face value as simply being nice, or as something they wished their teachers embodied. Rather they related these interactions as positively influencing their learning in school. The nature of the relationships teachers built with students were shaped by the power teachers had to shape student subjectivities and their own subjectivities. Teachers decided the ways in which they engaged with students, while students had very little power in determining how to engage with their teachers. The nature of relationships built in fields of disparate power relations highlights the ways in which subjectivities were co-constructed.

Fairness and Goodness An important way in which teachers shaped their own subjectivities was based on the ways in which teachers conceptualized what constituted fairness and goodness. The ways in which teachers understood their own subjectivities was mediated by positioning themselves as those who did the right thing. Teachers perceived themselves as altruistic due to the ways in which they 'help' students. Anojan said,

> When students say they can't pay I have found some monies and stuff for a lot of these students. I solve those problems. I think I will be in this profession long term, I can do this for the rest of my time, this is also…not a profitable job (laugh), not profitable but, it is somehow, it helps so many children right, I help so many. I feel like I need to be one of the reasons why these children come to a good place in their lives.

Anojan described the ways in which he supported students financially. He continued by saying that he saw himself being in this profession long term because it 'helps so many children come to

a good place in life'. As such he shaped his own subjectivity through ideologies of altruism. Indeed, students who benefited from his goodness bolstered this altruistic subjective positioning. Similarly, Bhavani noted,

> But for the teachers who go to the lower division classes, if we think oh at least if I can make these students answer five questions and just pass the exam, if we think that way, that will be a big blessing, like a merit we get for ourselves we would have done well in our lives, good deeds.

Bhavani explained that her work with students in the lower divisions as something that invited merit or blessings into her own life. This way of thinking is common, especially because ideas of charity, karma and fate present in this community. This ideology suggested that doing good deeds for others, especially the ones who struggle in life brings blessings into their own life. Helping students in terms of material supports was evident in all focal teacher interviews. Here, the teachers' subjectivity is shaped by their willingness and ability help, while the students' subjectivity is shaped by being recipients of help.

Another ideology that co-constructed student-teacher subjectivities was fairness based on treating students equally. Ravindran said,

> I teach everyone the same way and hit everyone equally as well. That's true about me. The ones who teach them also teach all of them in the same way. They don't do more for the best divisions and less for these ones. Even though they will tell you I don't discriminate, they will tell you how other teachers discriminate. That is the reality. The reason is that we are not prejudiced, and we don't discriminate among students. For example, even though I know who these kids are, even if I hit them, there is no partiality.

Ravindran noted that his idea of fairness constituted treating students equally by not discriminating against students and not showing partiality. It is important to note that Ravindran recognized that he had the power to treat students in discriminatory ways, but he made a conscious choice to not do so. As such he constructed his own subjectivity as some who is fair although having the power to be otherwise. Revathi held a similar view. She said,

> As far as we are concerned, we don't care if they are from the right kind of family or the wrong kind I treat them all the same. The students who already know me well they know that I am different kind of teacher, very fair in my ways. In the same way other teachers favor children who can study, I make sure things like that don't happen with me. I want everyone to realize that everyone is the same and will be treated equally.

Revathi took pride in her ability to treat students the same way by giving students equal opportunities regardless if they are 'from the right kind of family or the wrong kind'. In this excerpt, Revathi pointed out the student subjectivities based on the areas they came from could be the 'wrong kind'. In relation to this subject positioning, she constructs her own subjectivity as a teacher who decided not to regard where the student comes from in the ways in which she interacted with them, highlighting the power she wielded over students. Here, the co-construction of subjectivities was clear; because the fact that the students' areas being viewed as the wrong kind was not problematized, positioning student subjectivities as immutable, while her subjectivity was distinctly positioned in a positive light as a 'different kind of teacher' who disregarded where students came from.

Teachers' views on what constituted the 'right thing to do' co-constructed teacher-student subjectivities. The right thing to do was often positioned in reference to other teachers who did not keep up these ideals. By making a distinction between their own subjectivity in opposition to

other teachers, teachers positioned themselves as those who did the right thing. Anojan said,

> There are some teachers don't go to these lower classes to teach. Those things, we can't do much about it, because those teachers must work according to their conscience. They must think about that on their own, that's up to each individual teacher to do the right thing. So, because they were able to choose the classes, there is really no point in that. There is no use in teaching like that. They must think about working with the low divisions so that they can make them advance at least a little bit more isn't it? that would be the right thing to do. But in reality, even the fact that these teachers say these things is wrong isn't it? By right they should be teaching these students isn't it?

Anojan distinctly set himself apart from the teachers who engaged in discriminatory practices. He noted those teachers did not 'work according to their conscience' as such did not 'do the right thing'. He found it reprehensible that teachers refused to teach low ability-tracked classes. Implicitly these remarks highlighted the ways in which he did the right thing, because Anojan taught low ability tracked classes and taught them diligently. Similarly, Bhavani said,

> If a teacher is a true and sincere teacher, if that teacher is in school then he or she would have gone to the low division class in the first place. So, there is a wrong mentality, where they just do this for the salary, the ones who do this work just for the salary. Regardless of the salary, I do the right thing for the sake of the students.

Bhavani noted that some teachers were only interested in the salary and they had a wrong mentality. Bhavani described the ways in which the co-construction of subjectivities worked by considering the ways in which she was distinctly different from teachers that engaged in problematic practices.

In the above examples, these teachers positioned themselves as teachers whose subjectivities were shaped by doing what is right, co-constructing their peers' subjectivities as problematic. What was interesting though was none of the teachers problematized the ways in which student subjectivities were constructed by teachers. For example, the assumptions that circulated about where these students came from or their academic abilities was left unquestioned, ensuring regardless of who did the right thing or not, the students subjectivities that were pre-demined remained the same. These assumptions are imbued with power differentials that animate relational fields co-constructing of subjectivities.

Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the mechanisms through which student and teacher subjectivities were co-constructed through re-ordering school structures, interpreting war disruptions, teacher-student activities, and teacher-student relationships. The co-construction of subjectivities exposed a process of convivial political praxis, constituting assemblages of agency, oppositionality, subversion (Puar, 2009). For example, the ways in which war disruptions played out in forming student subjectivities underscored how similar experiences did not engender similar subjectivities (Puar, 2009). Rather, it was the interpretation of those experiences based on the social worlds and fields of power that shaped subjectivities (Mirza, 20009). Additionally, I explored the ways in which intersubjective experiences were mediated by power in ways that maintain systems of oppression (Lugones, 2003). Data show that subjectivity can be understood as events that unfold at intersections situated in practice. This unfolding is can be described as "the mutually constitutive nature of long and complex social, political and economic struggles and the historically fashioned identities-in-practice and subjectivities that the produce" (Holland & Lave, 2001, p.3). Differences between students and teachers cannot be positioned

similarly even when they navigate similar identity and ideological structures because subjectivities are constructed fluidly taking on multiple interpretations based on the complexities of their circumstances, such as the nature of the war experiences. Teachers and students did not have equal agency or power in producing subjectivities. The crux of this analysis lies in recognizing how inversions of similar experiences become re-constructed and co-constructed as the participants engaged in practice.

Chapter 6

Mapping Learning Processes: Trajectories Toward Transformative Praxis

This chapter details learning processes that took place during critical reflection activities. This study examined the ways in which teachers engaged in reflection activities and how reflections contributed to transformative praxis. Both teachers and their students reflected on their activities and experiences. Teachers viewed their teaching videos, wrote reflections, and shared their observations with me. Students in low-ability tracked classrooms also viewed the same videos and discussed them with me. Teachers and students described what they noticed and elucidated how they made sense of their observations. I paraphrased some of the students' comments or converted their comments into questions to incorporate them into the teacher interviews. I also drew questions from my own classroom observations, field notes, research reflections, and emerging understandings. I mediated and facilitated reflection interviews and focus groups to encourage and expand reflections.

The study design created repeated opportunities to understand the role critical reflection activities played in transforming praxis (Gutiérrez & Penuel, 2014). Reflection activities not only helped reveal how teachers thought about their work, but also focused on "a possible set of questions that may not have been posed or a set of puzzles that do not yet exist in the form of puzzles but are latent in the actualities of the experienced world" (Smith, 1987. p.91). Reflections exposed disjunctures and subjectivities by making them visible to the participants, so they could clarify and trouble their existence. Rogoff's (2003) idea of what it means to change or develop was an ideal way to understand what teachers learned through reflection activities. She explained "development is people's changing participation in socio-cultural activities of their communities (p. 52)." In this chapter I map the ways in which teachers moved toward changing

their participation based on sociocultural, historical constraints and affordances (Lee, 2017). I positioned learning within a situative perspective (Greeno, 1998). A situative perspective acknowledges how learning, and the generation of knowledges occur in interactive, socially organized activity systems (Greeno, 1989; Gutiérrez, 2008). Situative does not mean contexts determine all aspects of activities but takes into consideration a range of factors that mediate participation in activity systems. Learners teachers and students in this study, negotiated a full range of affordances and constraints in and through their practices. To map learning, I utilized two analytical tools: (a) attunement to affordances and constraints, and (b) borderlands and transgressing boundaries. These analytics intertwined, revealing important junctures in learning and teaching that enriched the processes of reflection and, in turn, indicated expansive forms of learning (Engeström, 2015).

Attuned activities pay attention to established practices and recognize its historicity and purpose within and beyond activity systems (McDermott & Raley, 2011). Attunement, or attuned activities were well-coordinated patterns of participation (social practices) which developed overtime in activity systems (Greeno,1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Learning occurred by negotiating affordances and constraints which resulted in participants becoming well-accustomed to a set of practices. Attuned activities teachers participated in, maintained teacher centrality in shaping how subjectivities and disjunctures were negotiated in relation to other participants and their activities. While attuned practices were ever-evolving, some practices had enduring features which were reified over time. This made participants who adhered to well-attuned activities more successful in complex activity arenas (McDermott & Varenne, 1995).

Hooks (2014) described transgressing boundaries as a set of activities that rejuvenated teaching practices and urged all participants to become open in ways that collectively “we can know

beyond boundaries of what is acceptable, so that we can think and rethink, so that we can create new visions…transgressions a movement against and beyond boundaries" (p. 12). Learning encompassed the ways in which teachers consciously constructed knowledges while crossing conceptual, ideological, and structural boundaries. Boundary work as Waitoller & Kozleski (2013) explained, serve as fertile ground for learning from tensions and contradictions in activity systems. Learning was essentially a function of crossing and transgressing boundaries when teachers became aware of them (Anzaldúa, 1987; hooks, 2014).

The purpose of this chapter is to map the ways in which teachers moved toward transformative praxis in ways that centered equity and inclusion. I conclude this chapter by pointing to expansive forms of learning that framed this participatory design-based research study. Expansive learning emphasizes that transformative praxis is not a destination, but an ongoing, increasingly sophisticated, expansive learning process, improving participant understandings of their own activity systems overtime (Engeström, 2015).

Nature of Reflections

In this section, I map the nature of reflections detailing how teachers engaged in reflection activities. By engaging teachers in reflection activities, I tried to shift teachers' gaze toward recognizing their teaching activities within the activity systems, rather than focusing on student and teacher actions as separate entities. Consequently, early reflections took defensive turns accentuating teacher discomforts as they became aware of boundaries. Despite these discomforts, teachers began to reconsider their activities and the ways in which they thought about their practices. The first section describes what teachers noticed in their practice and how they made meaning of them. Here, shifts in what they noticed and how they interpreted their activities will become apparent. Then I show how teachers deflected attempts to talk about their

activities and became defensive of their well-attuned practices. Finally, I discuss how teachers moved toward participating in reflections in ways that showed early signs of transgressing boundaries.

Noticing Students In early reflection activities teachers noticed student activities and scrutinized them carefully. The nature of what teachers observed revealed how teachers had become socialized to focus on student activities rather than themselves in their day to day activities. In revealing this reality Revathi said,

> The one in the last row, he had some other book on his table. Can you see? there was some other book on his table. I noticed only that when I watched the video. I was wondering why he had that [art] book on his table and not his Math book? There are students in this class who keep doing other class work while I am teaching but they don't get caught. I noticed that in the video, I caught what they were doing.

Revathi's early responses during video reflections singled out students who were not doing what they were supposed to. Similarly, Bhavani said,

> I noticed in the video that students were looking at an already corrected book and the rest were copying down answers. I didn't notice what they were up to when I was teaching. I caught it when I was looking at this video.

Like Revathi, Bhavani too watched students in the video and 'caught' their misdemeanors, using the video as an additional surveillance tool. This speaks to how well teachers had become attuned to practices of surveilling students. This establishes a mental boundary that maintained teacher activities as being above reproach, while student activities were monitored closely resulting in increased scrutiny. This pattern of watching students was so pervasive that it was

visible in written reflections. Teachers wrote their written reflections before they participated in reflection interviews. As a result, they wrote whatever they felt was important to them based on the videos. In the following written reflection, consider the range of ideas Ravindran highlighted:

> Because there were too many students in the class I couldn't watch all the students. The students who were seated in front were enthusiastic. The students seated in the back row were not paying attention, and neither were they taking down notes. I didn't hear much of the students who were seated at the back. (Written Reflection One: Ravindran)

Ravindran began his written reflection by pointing out impediments to 'watching' due to having too many students. Like Revathi and Bhavani, he explained students sitting in front of the class were 'enthusiastic' while those at the back 'were not paying attention.' He scrutinized student activities. This indicated boundaries that were maintained in relation to who was to be scrutinized by whom.

Another Aspect of this boundary became evident when teachers struggled to consider their teaching activities in relation to student activities, marking these two activities as distinctly separate. Prior to prompting, none of the teachers noticed their own activities in early reflections despite it being the central feature of the videos. Despite prompting her to say more about what she noticed, Revathi claimed "I didn't notice anything else in the video, I only noticed what these students were up to while watching the video.". Revathi limited her initial observations to students' activities to such a degree that she claimed she did not find anything noteworthy in her own activities. She said student activities were the *only* activities she noticed in the video. Bhavani's initial responses video recordings revealed the same pattern. She noticed students engaging in 'side talk', 'copying down answers.' She tried to infer if the students were 'concentrating or not', second guessing what their activities of looking and listening really

meant.

Teachers defaulted to their attuned practices in what they noticed while maintaining a power laden boundary where noticing was limited to scrutinizing student activities. This boundary was constructed in ways that positioned teachers as power brokers who had legitimate authority to scrutinize student activities. This attuned practice constrained crossing a boundary toward recognizing themselves and their activities in relation to students, obscuring the interconnected nature of participation in activity systems.

Noticing Binaries: Negatives and Positives When I prompted teachers to talk about what they noticed about themselves, teachers noticed mistakes in their teaching activities. Revathi said,

> I didn't notice any problems in my teaching in this video. The mistakes I saw in the previous videos, I noticed that they weren't there in this set of videos. I struggled to write the reflection because I had to think about it more, I felt I didn't make any mistakes in this one.

Revathi looked for 'mistakes' and 'problems' in her teaching to reflect upon. Having found none, she noted that she 'didn't notice' much else about her activities. Meaning, if there were no mistakes in her teaching, then there was nothing to reflect upon. The knowledges she constructed about her teaching were distilled into two categories good and bad. This made it difficult to account for the full range of complexities that mediated teacher activities.

Bhavani's written reflection highlighted a similar pattern. Bhavani like the other focal teachers struggled to articulate the nature of her teaching activities outside the binary construction of good and bad practices. She wrote the following in her first written reflection:

> Although I have been teaching English for almost three years, this was the first

> time I got a chance to analyze my teaching. This helped me to sum up positive and negative sides of my teaching style. It was unintentional, and I didn't realize it until watching these videos the good parts and bad parts of my teaching, it seemed easier to figure out the negatives of my teaching while watching (Written Reflection One: Bhavani).

The reflection activities brought upon an array of emotions and thoughts about their own teaching activities. Bhavani focused on 'analyzing' the videos by bifurcating her activities into 'good parts' and 'bad parts.' Indeed, this may have overwhelmed her as she grappled with containing her thoughts into these binary constructions. Perhaps more importantly, Bhavani mentioned how the videos made their 'negatives' easier to spot, indicating the videos may have been threatening to her as it made mistakes visible. Later during the interview Bhavani said,

> This was the first time I was observing myself teach, it was fun to watch. There were good things and bad things, when I watched it as a viewer. I was able to identify the problems in my teaching. I was able to identify them a little bit more. If we look at the positive side, I felt that I was explaining the lesson very well. I also felt that I was maintaining a good energy level. As far as the negatives go, I thought I was walking too much in the class that was distracting to me. I felt my hand gestures were too much, but in terms of what I saw I was wondering if it was disturbing students. I felt a bit unsettled when I thought about it.

Bhavani pointed out that she was able to notice 'good things and bad things' and 'identify what the problems were.' It is important to note that none of the questions in the interviews asked teachers to evaluate themselves. The questions simply asked what stood out to them in the video (see Appendix B). Although teachers were asked about their teaching activities in general ways,

they paid attention to their activities by bifurcating them into good and bad which might explain why the experience WAS ‘unsettling’. This made visible yet another boundary where teachers valuated of themselves within binary configurations, without considering the complexities that mediate activities.

These examples show that binaries are boundaries constructed by communities of practice as a means of evaluating attuned practices. Focusing on negatives, problems, and mistakes rather than on affordances and constraints within the entire activity system, is a constructed boundary which may have helped teachers cope with the complexities of teaching. Misinterpreting tensions and constraints by distilling them into binary categories, obscured the complexities that constrained student and teacher activities making reflection activities evaluative instead of critical, defeating the purpose of reflexivity in shaping equitable school systems.

Deflective and Defensive Turns Considering what teachers noticed in early reflections, I shifted how I prompted teachers. I become specific about what I wanted them to attend to in the videos. Recognizing the reciprocal relationship between teaching and learning activities challenged teachers. Persistent prompting resulted in accentuating deflective and defensive turns.

Deflective turns. When I asked teachers to focus on their teaching activities, they often deferred to me. They expected me to give them feedback on their teaching, instead of illuminating how they made sense of their teaching activities. Consider the following conversation I had with Ravindran. I made two conversational moves to shift his gaze to his own practice:

TH: What else did you notice about your teaching?

Ravindran: Perhaps you are the one who must tell me then, not me

TH: I am trying to understand why you did what you did

Ravindran: Hmm,I don't know miss. No, I didn't notice much else. Well if I were to learn something more, then the students must tell me something or you must. Like give me feedback on what I should change and so on. That way I will be able to know what is going on

He parried both of my moves, deflecting attention back to me. In the first instance, he asked me to give him feedback on his teaching. In the second, he claimed to understand what I was asking about but continued to push back saying that the critique should come from me or the students, avoiding talking about his own analysis.

Revathi also deflected in similar ways. She said, "hmm…what do you mean, are you asking me how my teaching was? If that's the case maybe you need to tell me so that what I saw becomes clearer to me. Revathi pointed out that it was important that I shared my opinion on the video so that her practices became 'clearer' to her. When I redirected the conversation toward her teaching, she responded by saying, 'I am not sure what to say'. When I prompted her further, she said, "in this video one thing I noticed was that I was looking at the board too much when I was talking, I felt that way", and promptly deflected noting, "now tell me what you noticed". Although my discursive moves were meant to encourage teachers to cross boundaries in ways that would enable them to reflect on their own contributions to teaching and learning, these moves resulted in deflection. Deflections showed an important aspect of attuned practices marked by the power laden boundaries that marked resistance to scrutinize teacher activities. This was an indication of the discomforts in engaging in boundary work required practitioners to contend with their well-attuned practices (Kozleski & Handy, 2017).

Defensive turns: teaching activities. Reflections took defensive turns when teachers were prompted to think critically about their activities based on student feedback and my observations (in relation to what students discussed). Defensive turns were more pronounced when teachers had to contend with student feedback that ran counter to the ways in which teachers understood themselves and their activities. In the following excerpt, I shared student responses to the theory class Anojan taught. Students pointed out that Anojan gave them too many questions, and although he was explaining them well, students claimed that they struggled to remember content. I shared this observation by asking him a question (to conceal the identity of the students).

> TH: Do you think that the content you taught in the class might be too much for the students to grasp in one class period, and that's why they may have struggled at the exam?
>
> Anojan: No, that's not possible because the same questions I gave them came for the real exam. This tutorial we were working on included notes from grade six to eleven. This tutorial I did had everything students need to know for the Art theory exam. There was no reason for students to find it difficult because all the notes and images they needed were given. They could have easily done it well, if they had only studied all 500 questions in that tutorial, if they did, they would have gotten 40 out of 40 points at the exam.

Anojan justified of his teaching practice. He spent a considerable amount of time and effort explaining each question and answer to the students. His expectation was that once he explained, the rest was up to the students. He expected students to study ‘all 500 questions’ to score 40 points at the exam. These types of attuned practices were evident in all four teachers. They

explained how these well-established practices should engender greater academic performance. Teachers protected their teaching activities because they believed in their usefulness. The boundaries drawn between what constituted teaching as distinctly different from student learning activities, made teaching activities manageable giving teachers some assurance that they were engaging in their activities in meaningful ways. Any attempt to blur the boundary resulted in defensiveness.

Teachers became defensive feeling unsettled when I specifically asked about supporting students in low-ability tracked groups. I asked Bhavani if there was something she could have done differently to support students who might have struggled in class. Bhavani responded,

> What could I have done differently? Honestly miss for me. I didn't think about what I could have done differently at all. I don't think that way when I think of my teaching. Well if I had thought of an alternative, then I would have used that alternative method in the first place isn't it? [Long pause].

Bhavani became defensive, indicated by the rhetorical question at the end of this quote. I interpreted this as defensive because it was sarcastic. Teachers and I avoided using sarcasm in our conversations as it was typically considered a mark of disrespect. Teachers were mindful of how they responded to me, maintaining conversational formality due to my position as a researcher. I understood her pause as the moment she realized that the tone of her remark maybe taken up negatively by me. She continued, "well it didn't occur to me at the time that I must do something differently for those who struggle. Maybe if those students concentrated more and listened more carefully they could have kept up with what I was teaching". The pause was followed by admitting that it did not occur to her that she must consider the learning needs of students specifically. The defensive turn in this conversation signified that teachers who

participated in this study saw themselves as competent, which they were for the most part. Asking teachers what they could have done differently may have been interpreted as blaming teachers and or questioning their competence.

Revathi maintained a similar stance in her response to my question, "do you think by doing it [teaching] this way that the students understand what is being taught?" She responded, "they won't understand anything at all no matter how I teach. The rest, who you know who sort of got it right, those ones who are at the average level, they will gain from the way I taught this. That is all there is to it." Revathi pointed out that students at the average level are those who understand lessons she taught. She insinuated that there was no point in altering her methods, because it was students who did not understand, which had nothing to do with her teaching. This indicated the ways in which teachers constructed boundaries between student and teacher activities. By locating that her attuned practice was geared toward the average student, and not some students who 'won't understand anything at all,' Revathi located her activities within the contours of these constructed boundaries of whom teachers sought to engage. Because teachers did not connect their teaching activities to poor student performance, they were unable to analyze the potential reciprocal connections between student and teacher activities.

Ravindran shared a different view point as to why his teaching method needed no alteration. His defensiveness was prompted by the fact that he saw himself already transgressing boundaries in terms of supporting students. When he was prompted to explain his teaching activities in relationship to student understanding content he said,

> When I saw this video, I thought there was no problem with the lesson I taught. As far as I thought of the students it was fine. This is my usual teaching method. This is how I teach, but I know that this is not the teaching method to follow according to the system.

I pressed him, “what do you mean by according to the system?” He responded,

> I mean, they [education authorities] expect that we put students in groups. Then we need to keep them individually or in groups and we are supposed to teach like that, with activities and all. But if we teach using that method, that is not suitable for the exam. If I teach like that, I won’t be able to give them questions like you saw here [on the video], or notes. I won’t be able to give them any of that. Also, I won’t be able to give the answers to these questions.

I clarified, “if you put them in groups like what teacher’s guide says is it?” He continued,

> Yes. If I divide them in groups and give them some information, the student I assume will be a part of the group and do the work, that’s all the student will get out of it. The method I follow is the one that is most suitable for the exam, so that is why I chose this method of teaching. I am the one who decides which method is suitable for students.

Ravindran saw no reason to alter his teaching practices because he was sure that his method of teaching was the most suitable ensuring passing exams. In fact, by disregarding the teachers’ guide, he saw himself transgressing boundaries set by the institution. Once he established the boundary between himself and the ‘system’, he constructed a set of practices he assumed worked for his students. It is important to note that teachers were willing to transgress boundaries when they thought it was necessary for student success. Yet, in transgressing he developed a set of practices that might not be useful to students as he might have expected. As such, defensive turns were also a function of teachers making decisions against the system, as such they protected them assiduously.

From a situative perspective, defensiveness could be seen a result of teachers protecting

the validity of their practices that are maintained within boundaries. Teachers taught in specific ways within their boundaries, and the students on their side of the boundary were expected to engage in learning that benefited from these practices. These boundaries were established by teachers, marked by Anojan stating ‘students don’t need to find it difficult’, Bhavani noting ‘It didn't occur to me that I must do something differently for those who struggle’ and Revathi pointing out that only some ‘will gain’ by the way she taught. Therefore, it was difficult for teachers to accept that their practices within their boundaries was not viewed in the same way by students. Thus, their defensiveness was a result of recognizing the porous nature of the boundary and the discomforts in trying to understand how to negotiate these emergent contradictions.

Defensive turns: discipline activities. Teachers became defensive when students remarked on the ways in which teachers engaged in disciplinary practices. Consider the how Ravindran understood harsh discipline practices:

> Teachers make the decision, we hit one person so that we can control the whole class. We threaten some students as a way of controlling all of them. The point is to make the others afraid, that is the reason for hitting or to keep the students quiet or just to get the students motivated and encourage them to do work. Anojan and I, we hit in terrible ways, we show no mercy, we are brutal.

Ravindran justified the use of violence as a way of ensuring students paid attention in class, and howthis was good and necessary for their students. Ravindran struggled to see the relationship between his brutal actions and how that shaped student experiences. I prompted him to focus on this reality by using set of comments student made in relation to his harshness. I rephrased student comments to show how students were too afraid to engage with him in class which impacted their ability understand content.

Ravindran became defensive when I asked about his discipline practices and its impact on students' learning. He said, "no not at all, my harshness does not impact them at all, that does not happen at all". He clarified, "when I teach, I am friendly, only when they misbehave then I become you know very brutal with them. But that doesn't impact their learning". He was convinced, that his practice of being harsh with students had no impact on student learning, because he drew a clear boundary between his instructional activities and discipline activities.

The boundary between instruction and discipline was prevalent among all four teachers. Revathi shared the following explanation defending the use of fear in the classroom. I mentioned that students were too afraid to approach teachers when they didn't understand lessons because of harsh disciplinary actions. She responded,

> I know that if a student approaches a teacher because the child did not understand something, the teachers don't create problems for students. They never do it. Scolding them is to maintain control in the class, that has nothing to do with teaching, I don't think so that happens.

Revathi found students' points of view inaccurate because discipline activities were different from teaching activities though both were mediated by fear. When I prompted her to consider how fear might impede learning she responded, "you know unless my teaching is not good then it makes sense to take their views seriously, other than that there is no real reason to bother with what students say." Revathi's defensiveness stemmed from a boundary where instructional activities were viewed as distinctly sperate from discipline activities. With securely contained practices with these boundaries, the relationships between teaching and discipline were almost completely obscured. When students challenged the boundaries, she noted that there was 'no real reason to bother with what students say' because as far as she was concerned her teaching did

not impact students in the ways students described. In many ways teacher activities imbued with fear and harshness were well attuned practices within this community of practice. As a result, these practices resulted in reifying power laden boundaries between teachers and students, making transgressing these boundaries challenging.

The Shifting Nature of Reflections Despite the nature of noticing, deflections and defensiveness, overtime teachers began to question their meaning making processes in relation to what they noticed. They became more responsive, showing deeper understandings as to why they engaged in teaching activities in specific ways. While early reflections did not unearth deeper meanings of their activities, there were tell-tale signs of transformative praxis. Specifically, teachers started becoming more willing to reconsider their activities. Bhavani's reconsideration started by imagining what students might be experiencing on the other side of the boundary of her teaching activities. In her written reflection she noted,

> I was trying to figure out which of my school teachers had influenced me and my teaching style the most. Unfortunately, I couldn't make a conclusion yet. In addition to that, while watching these videos, I tried to imagine myself as a student in the classroom (Written Reflection One: Bhavani)

Bhavani tried to relate what she saw in the videos to her teaching style and what factors might have shaped it. Moreover, she tried to imagine herself as a student in the classroom, relating her own experiences as a student to consider what students might have experienced.

Teachers also became open to viewing student activities in relation to their own activities. Anojan said,

> In this video I noticed that every time I draw on the board while explaining students listen carefully. But when I just read notes, they seemed to be getting distracted, like this boy

he was copying the notes, but I know that was because I was reading the notes to fast. Anojan noticed student activities in relation to his own teaching. He began to recognize that his teaching activities had to be noticed in relation to what students were doing and vice versa. In the early stages of reflection activities, it was evident that teachers began to shift the ways in which they reflected. These shifts were evident in what teachers noticed, how they made sense of their boundaries and attuned practices and started questioning their practices, showing beginning signs of the potential for expansive learning to occur in borderlands, making transformative praxis a possibility.

Shaping and Interpreting Student Engagement

In this section I draw attention to the ways in which teachers shifted their thinking in relation to student engagement. The video reflections provided opportunities for teachers to reflect upon how students and teachers engaged in classroom activities, as well as focus on their relationship with students. During reflection interviews teachers revealed shifts in the ways in which they viewed student engagement. Teachers recognized how attuned practices maintained power laden boundaries, shaping how they interpreted student activities.

Attuned Instructional Patterns Instructional practices mediated student teacher relationships. Teachers complained that students in low ability-tracked groups were easily distracted. I asked Revathi how she redirected students' attention. She replied:

> I become stern all of a sudden, then they stop disrupting the class at least for a little while. I use that or, I find some difficult questions or something like that, then I ask them suddenly, unexpectedly I make them stand and answer, from that point on they don't disrupt the class. Because they know that it is because they were talking that the teacher is asking them questions. When they know that they stay quietly in class.

Revathi re-directed distracted students by calling on them or by asking questions from the whole group. Revathi explained how she was attuned to catching students off-guard with her questions as a means of reengaging students and keeping them on task. The students were kept in a constant state of suspense unable to predict her questioning strategy. Asking questions doubled up as an instructional and behavior management strategy. Revathi foregrounded managing student behaving by limiting class disruption and maintaining silence rather than ensuring content understanding.

Using teaching activities as a form of testing student engagement was evident in Ravindran's lessons. Ravindran explained how he used his instructional activities to shape student engagement in the following conversation:

> For example when I use this strategy, I ask is the year 1840?, they say yes. But if I switch the question and ask them is the year 1840 for sure? they will say no sir. I want them to know the answer under pressure, so I confuse them. So, I scare them and ask questions in a threatening way. Then they give the answer because they don't want to give me the wrong answer and get punished. They will pay attention in class.

Ravindran recognized that his strategy confused students. Yet what was more important than student learning was that they produced answers under duress. The question he asked was, 'in which year was the Kandy Kingdom taken over by the British Empire?" The correct answer was 1815, which was never mentioned during the whole lesson. Instead each student was asked the same question. The first student responded 1840, and the rest repeated the same answer as Ravindran moved from student to student repeating the same question. Students were not told if their answers were correct. About half way into the lesson, he threatened students saying, 'are

you sure that's the answer? His tone became harsher over time. Students remained standing until he questioned all forty students. They were left in this state of precarity during the entire lesson.

Bhavani noted that she noticed differences in the ways she interacted with students in the high-ability tracked class. She said "I wondered if I was too close to the students and too friendly and fun-like with them. That's what I felt." When I probed the differences in her interaction patterns with the students, Bhavani said, "there is a difference yes, but why that is, I am not sure. I must think about that." I reassured her that I was only asking her to speculate why she noticed the difference. She went on to say:

> This class [Ten C] is not stressful to me at all. So, I can talk to them the way I naturally talk miss. They don't take what I say too seriously or too lightly, they are not the ones who will not take up what I say the wrong way and take advantage of my friendliness.

Despite not recognizing the full implications of the ways she related to students, it was evident that she began to question this boundary that shaped her relationship with students by noting 'I have to think about that.' She identified that teaching the top ability group was 'not stressful', that she talked with them 'naturally' because the students in this class will not 'take advantage of her friendliness', meaning that these students will not use her friendliness to challenge her status as a teacher. By pointing out that 'they are not the ones' she is demarcated a relational boundary between students in the high ability-tracked group in contrast to the ones in low ability tracked groups. Therefore, her attuned interactions were shaped by the boundaries created based on her assumptions about students who in inhabited these divergent groups.

Student Response Patterns Boundaries created and maintained shaped the ways in which teachers (mis)interpreted student engagement. Teachers were prompted to consider if the ways in which students responded to them in class was indicative of student learning

(understanding content). It was evident that teacher interpretations of student learning were based on performative cues teachers had constructed of what students' understanding might look like in classrooms. I asked Bhavani how she deciphered if students understood what she taught. She gave an example saying,

> I know based on their responses, I can, I can make a conclusion like, yes, they have understood something like 'type one if clause'. If I tell students this is Type One you have to put 'will' here, and put the verb there, when I say that, they will do it exactly as I instructed them. I know they have understood when they put the word 'will' in the right place.

It seemed that Bhavani interpreted students understanding a concept based on following her instructions verbatim. She followed this statement by pointing out how her students were not able to respond correctly when the task was complicated, saying, "but the only problem with these students is. when I give them in mixed (type if clauses), they don't know how to differentiate it and answer in the correct way. In response, I asked her if it was possible that the students didn't understand the concept of 'if clauses'. She responded emphatically, "no no miss! they know where to put 'will' but they are very slow, like weak students, so they don't know how to do the rest only".

When she was asked if student responses might have indicated that they didn't understand the concept, she insisted that the problem was with the students being too slow and weak academically. She interpreted student understanding content based on their ability to follow instructions and reproduce what she taught. If a student was able to respond by placing the word 'will' correctly as she instructed, then they had understood 'if clauses'. If they could not do anything further, their lack of understanding was due to their own inability. This example

shows of how teachers may (mis)interpret student responses, by focusing on overt performances that indicated learning.

(Mis) interpreting student engagement became evident when I asked Ravindran why some students struggled to understand content based on his instructional strategies. Ravindran said, “that is because these students haven’t gone home and studied what I taught. That's the problem. That is the truth. but you know some of the children they have these [bad] tendencies right, so because of that they misbehave.” He clarified how he understood students who learned content in appropriate ways stating, “good students, when they understand they remain quiet without a hum in class.” Ravindran was persuaded that understanding lessons and grasping content knowledge were student responsibilities. He was also convinced that the reasons students failed to understand lessons was because of their bad ‘tendencies.’ He interpreted students remaining quiet ‘without a hum’ as a mark of students having understood content.

Like the other teachers in this study, teachers did not ask students how much they comprehended what was being taught. For instance, teachers did not ask students to rephrase or elaborate concepts. Curiously, according to teachers the mark of having understood content was to remain quiet. Ravindran elaborated how he interpreted students’ understanding of lessons he taught:

> When students understand they act normal, because they understand everything, so they are quiet. [referring to the video] Can you see? They were listening quietly because they understood everything I said. They are quiet because this material was absolutely clear, they have understood everything I taught a hundred percent.

Ravindran pointed out several performative aspects that he saw was indicative of students

understanding what he taught. For example, acting ‘normal’, included normative performances like being ‘quiet’, and not asking him further questions. Meeting these performative markers indicated to him that what he taught was ‘absolutely clear’ to the students. He did not consider if students being quiet might have meant they didn’t understand content.

Although Ravindran interpreted students being silent in class as a mark of them having understood content, students claimed a contradictory view. When I asked his students why they were quiet in his class, Vibhushan said, “oh no miss, we don’t make a hum in his class. Even when we don’t understand we do nothing only, we just wait, just put our head down or just look at him like we understand.” These (mis)interpretations valorized normative learning performances that did not engender meaningful learning and teaching.

Shifts Towards Reconsidering Student Engagement In this section I describe how teachers began reconsidering student engagement. Teachers entered a borderland space where they were more willing to engage with ambiguities in relation to how they understood themselves and their teaching activities. In response to pointing out that students being quiet in class was not an indication of student learning, teachers expected students to be enthusiastic, share their concerns, and inform them when lessons were difficult to understand. Yet students often pointed out that these expectations were unrealistic since their relationships with teachers constrained interactive engagement. During reflection activities, teachers started making connections between the ways in which their relationships with students shaped student engagement. Bhavani noted:

> Students in the lower divisions don't have that confidence to walk up to a teacher and ask for extra help or tell us if they don’t understand. They don't have the kind of confidence, that if they go and approach such a teacher that the teacher will

> actually teach them, when most of these teachers don't even teach when they come to class isn't it? Students don't think about issues in the same way we adults do right. So now I am wondering if it isn't fair to expect that kind of response from students like walking up to the teacher or asking questions from teachers.

Bhavani recognized expecting students to share their concerns openly with teachers was unreasonable. She acknowledged that this was unreasonable due to teacher activities. Bhavani recognized students lacked confidence to approach their teachers because of the ways teachers treated students. These considerations resulted in Bhavani thinking of ways in which she could transgress this teacher/learner boundary. She assumed the responsibility of creating meaningful engagement opportunities for students. Bhavani noted:

> What I felt was that students I could somehow find a way to increase the student's involvement in class. I felt like I was the only one talking for the most part asking questions all the time, and when I ask questions they answer and that's all they did, that's what I saw mostly. I felt I didn't create or give them that opportunity. I feel that way, if I do activities then [maybe] they won't be afraid to ask questions if they don't understand.

Bhavani pointed out she had to create opportunities for students to engage in class. Instead of predetermining that students cannot and will not be able to participate in meaningful ways, Bhavani recognized the importance of creating opportunities for engagement. There was an important shift in her thinking, as she realized how previous classroom activities constrained meaningful engagement.

Like Bhavani, Ravindran's understanding of shaping meaningful engagement with students showed interesting shifts when I explained how fear was mediated student engagement.

In response Ravindran said,

> I accept what you are saying. I know what you are saying about students being afraid in class. That is impacting their learning. I didn't think about that aspect before. Maybe they are afraid of me, and that's why they don't come to me and they just stay quietly. I missed that connection somehow.

Earlier in the study, he became defensive when students pointed out that the ways in which he engaged with students impacted their learning experiences. He elaborated further, when the issue of harsh discipline was brought up.

> I have begun to realize how my harsh ways are making students too afraid in class. Even though I do this for their own good, they misunderstand my intentions. I didn't think about that aspect before, that my strict ways might be making them too afraid to learn. I will do something about it, but I don't know what yet. I must think about it more.

Ravindran 'realized' that his 'harsh ways are making students too afraid in class.' Although he did not know how he might tackle this constraint, he recognized the ambiguity in this in-between space required him to rethink how fear was complicit in constraining students' willingness to approach him, limiting student learning. He realized he 'will have to change something' about his activities, entering a borderland between his past and future practice.

All four teachers in this study began to understand the ways in which student engagement was shaped by well attuned activities and boundaries marked by power disparities. Mapping changes across teachers revealed important shifts in their understanding of student engagement. In recognizing the layered boundaries that contained these systems, teachers recognized inconsistencies their interpretations of student engagement. When teachers questioned their own practices in relation to student activities, they found an entry point into transgressing boundaries

in actionable, meaningful ways.

Negotiating Institutional Constraints

During reflection activities teachers formed deeper understandings of the institutional constraints that shaped their teaching activities. These understandings were an important juncture in the study. Teachers revealed factors that constrained their ability to engage in meaningful teaching activities. Moreover, recognizing institutional constraints generated their deeper awareness of how teacher activities within activity systems profoundly impacted their students. In this section I discuss two constraints, accountability structures and state mandated curricula.

Accountability Processes Teachers described how their teaching activities were shaped by unreasonable demands imposed by accountability processes. These processes were geared toward evaluating teacher adherence to institutional processes such as improving examination success rates. In the following excerpt Ravindran explained problematic ways education authorities addressed teacher performance:

> The administration at the zonal level calls teachers for a meeting. He (referring to the administrator), calls us and asks why our students perform poorly. You know, he makes us stand up in front of all the people present at the meeting. Just imagine how embarrassing that is. Then they make each of us stand up and they ask each one of us in front of everyone else, how many children in your class? how many will pass the exam? They ask how many will pass for sure? They say give the pass-percentage you home to get in writing, guaranteeing this many will pass.

Ravindran shared how teachers were held responsible for ensuring students passed examinations. The ways in which the administration demanded these outcomes were indeed disturbing, as they

resorted to asking teachers to guarantee results and then reprimanded them severely when they did not produce desired outcomes. He continued:

> After we write the note guaranteeing they call us for a meeting at the exam hall. Then they point out that the percentage I said will pass and mention that despite our guarantee students haven't passed. Then they ask us what we were doing in class if this many failed. If you hear the way I get scolded in those meetings, you haven't heard anything like that before, the harshness the humiliation. Yes, miss they scold us so much and so badly and there is nothing we can do miss. We are getting beaten up in many angles miss, we have no other option but to bear this up.

The pressure imposed impacted Ravindran in ominous ways. Ravindran explained how these experiences shaped the ways in which he engaged with his students:

> Because of the scolding I get at the zone, I take it out on students. We force the students to do their work. Because if they don't do well I am the one who gets scolded from zonal authorities even more. So then how do I resolve this problem? Who am I to push or pressurize? Yes, we pressure the students. We jump all over the students and bite their heads off.

Ravindran made an important shift by recognizing how constraints imposed on teachers by oppressive accountability structures impacted students. Ravindran was not just complaining about constraints, rather he connected these constraints to the impact it had on students. He acknowledged the pressure put on teachers cascaded. He continued,

> Then what do you think happens to the teacher who is pressurized? The teacher gets very angry. Teachers are angry because students didn't write what they taught at the exam, the

> students didn’t do it. So then, teachers obviously take out that anger on the students. You know, this situation cannot be escaped.

Ravindran exposed how hierarchical power structures distributed power in ways that made individuals helpless at each level. Multiple times he pointed out that there’s ‘nothing we can do’ or these circumstances ‘cannot be escaped’ speaking on behalf of himself and other teachers who faced similar pressures. In noting how these realities ‘cannot be escaped’ Ravindran indicated he was as helpless when it came to negotiate institutional demands revealing the pernicious implications of these accountability structures.

It was not surprising why teachers felt helpless. Not meeting demands created significant repercussions on their careers and incomes. In the following excerpt Anojan described one such consequence:

> In all division 85% failed Math. More than 85% failed. The math teacher said I don't know what is going to happen this time. He said this might result in transferring the principal. [Only I] don't know if that's what they will do because of these bad results. He said that it was a big problem that was being discussed all over the place.

Being prematurely transferred from a school due to poor performance was viewed as a punishment. These premature transfers are unambiguously termed ‘punishment transfers’. This is a tactic the education department uses to reprimand teachers and principals for all types of misdemeanors including accusations of child abuse and sexual assault. Accused educators get posted to rural schools that are more challenging than their current school. The possible transfer of the school principal underscored the perceived gravity of the situation that arose due to 85% of students failing a mock examination.

The implementation of accountability processes in everyday activities severely constrained teaching practices. In earlier interviews, teachers did not talk about the ways in which accountability structures impacted them. In fact, they accepted them as given reality that they could not escape, a border that entrapped them. However, during reflections teachers were prompted to talk about their day-to-day activities and (re)examine the ways in which they impacted teachers and students. Bhavani observed:

> They [Administrative officials] come and check, to see if the date in this thing [book] matches the one in the date given on the scheme of work document. Honestly all this is useless and unnecessary work. All that is just extra work, writing plans and all that which we don't use.

Bhavani's point was not merely a complaint about paper work. Importantly, she explained how accountability standards were based on filling documents that were not used in their instructional activities. She explained the tedious, time consuming processes she needed to follow:

> We have to give these plans to the principal and get his signature every Monday. We have to do that every week. But honestly miss, we don't teach according to that thing [lesson plan] at all. I am not sure if there are teachers who teach according to that or what, I of course don't follow it at all. But because I have to get the signature on Monday morning, I stay up on Sunday nights and I copy down something from what I wrote two weeks ago. I just copy it down and come and give it to be signed. There are situations like that.

Bhavani explained how lesson plans were used as accountability measures. Those who supervised teachers from the administrative office paid attention to the minutia of these lesson plans like dates and headings. This was the standard practice for holding teachers accountable for

good teaching practices.

Bhavani met these demands although they did not impact her instructional activities in meaningful ways. She performed ‘compliance’ while resisting the demand by copying lessons from earlier weeks. These compliance boundaries imposed rituals that subverted the stated purpose of accountability meaningful teaching and learning. Teachers stayed within the boundaries created by the institution and (and subverted them from within).

Not adhering had negative consequences. Revathi explained that last year two teachers got in trouble for not correcting student notebooks. She stated, “they caught two teachers and those teachers faced a lot of trouble.” After that incident, the authorities checked every single page of each student notebook to see if they were corrected. Revathi explained how not correcting student notebooks got two teachers in a ‘lot of trouble’. Although she did not mention what ‘a lot of trouble’ was, the fact authorities checked all the books showed that this offence was considered serious. It alerted teachers into complying with practices imposed on them by institutional authorities. Ravindran explained the ways in which they were questioned about their work and why he followed curricula guidelines in completing lessons:

> If not, the supervision team comes and looks at it and immediately questions me asking why didn't you finish the lesson on time? why isn’t the date accurate? Then they ask why are these dates have shifted? Why didn't you do this and that [according to the lesson plan]?

Ravindran described punitive outcomes of accountability structures. The accountability questions focused on finishing lessons on time, the accuracy of dates, and following lesson plans. No question implied accountability for student learning or meaningful teaching activities. Teachers were mindful of the ways in these institutional boundaries impacted their teaching

activities and student learning. Revathi explained how she attuned her teaching activities in negotiating the constraints imposed on her. She explained,

> Because the authorities check student note books that is why I make students only do one or two sums in class. I only do two sums in class for them to write on the book, so I can correct all 40 books in case the authorities check. The rest of the practice sums I tell the students to do in on another book on their own, because no one from the higher authorities see that book right, so then that's okay, even if the student has done the sum wrong no problem right because they [authorities] don't see it.

Revathi explained how she negotiated the institutional constraint by reducing the amount of work she did with students. Correcting books took precedence over using practice sums to teach students. More practice sums meant more work to correct which was difficult for Revathi to do. This impeded student learning in two ways. First, one of the main complaints her students had was that Revathi does not do enough practice sums so that they can grasp content. Then, Revathi asked students to practice on their own as a solution but noted that even if the students did the sums wrong that it would not matter because the aim was to comply with the institutional demand.

Another complaint students had was the teachers rushed through lessons. Ravindran explained how institutional demands shaped these activities.

> We have to keep to the same timeline set in the syllabus miss. We can't be flexible with days because they check the dates in the record book with the semester scheme. So, if we teach the way students want [teach slowly], where I take my own time and calmly give notes, and explain slowly, and correct all the books, if I do that I will get in trouble with

> the authorities. We cannot teach slowly without rushing, if the teachers teach slowly then we will get in trouble.

Ravindran rushed through lessons to avoid getting in trouble. In reflecting upon institutional boundaries teachers worked within and how they impacted students, teachers began to see important ways in which institutional boundaries limited meaningful student and teacher activities.

State Mandated Curricula Curricula teachers followed in their classroom played an important role in the ways in which teachers engaged in teaching activities. In early interviews, teachers talked very little about the curricula, except discussing its vastness and complexity. However, during reflection activities they recognized the ways in which curricular mediated their activities. Due to the demands placed on teachers to complete the syllabi[7], they prioritized completing syllabi over student learning. In the following excerpt, Revathi shared why she prioritized completing the syllabus over student learning:

> There was a teacher who took her own cool time and explained the lessons calmly making sure all the students understood. But she couldn't complete the syllabus. This teacher got in trouble with the principal for not completing the syllabus. So as teacher I know should also think of finishing the lesson in forty minutes so can I move on to the next lesson and then complete the syllabus.

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[7] . In Sri Lanka, every nationally mandated curriculum has a syllabus or subject guide that sequences the order that concepts are taught, and exams given. These syllabi organize what teachers do. They serve to organize what teachers teach, the order in which they sequence learning, and the pace at which they move from concept to concept, regardless of how students respond.

Teacher decisions to prioritize student learning over completing the syllabus was prudent because the state valued complete content over learning content. As teachers reflected upon their practices they recognized how the race to complete the syllabi inhibited useful teaching activities. Bhavani commented:

> I think about teaching in active ways, I want to because students will understand better. But if we are to do something active, then covering the syllabus becomes terribly difficult. Even though I don't like chalk and talk, that's what I do. I can't help it.

Bhavani opted for 'chalk and talk methods', her phrase for direct instruction, because she felt she had no other option. Recognizing the ways in which this constraint impacted teaching was an important outcome. It highlighted that even when teachers were willing to engage in teaching activities that supported student learning, structural constraints imposed, resulted in teachers defaulting to activities that did not enrich learning experiences.

Making another important observation of the nature of these constraints, Anojan described the activities teachers were asked to engage in that impeded meaningful teaching:

> Those days when we were students we had less notes and more drawing. Now there are so much of notes, so I run out of time. Those days notes were less, the time to draw pictures was more. Now, they have increased the number of notes and given the same amount of time given to drawing pictures. So, it's a constant dilemma, do I finish the notes, or should I finish teaching them drawing?

Anojan talked about the ways in which the nature of content in their respective subjec areas gave teachers very little leeway in engaging in meaningful teaching activities. Not only did syllabi determine what type of information should be emphasized over others, it also stipulated the type of learning practices students should engage in. By talking about syllabi in-depth and

(re)examining its functions, teachers made connections to the ways in which syllabi shaped their teaching.

In the following excerpt from my observation notes, I described an art theory class Anojan taught. The quote that follows illustrates how this type of teaching shaped what students were expected to do:

> The teaching activities comprised of going through the entire tutorial question by question. Anojan was giving students the answers one by one. At times, he stopped and showed them the picture or the sculpture from the pictures hanging in class. He further explained some characteristics like, the Greek sculptures show men in extremely muscular ways. He also gave local examples of how statues are made so that students can understand a few characteristics. He told them answers by highlighting specifics they should remember when answering the question and the multiple ways in which they can be marked off as wrong during exams (Classroom Observation: October 26, 2017).

When Anojan was asked how his focus on teaching art theory using these set of practices supported students he said, "I explained all 100 questions to them one by one. Then I told them to memorize all the answers to these 100 questions. I told them to memorize all the 100 answers for the exam." Anojan spent a considerable amount of time teaching this lesson; he meticulously worked through questions and answers. The syllabi required that teachers spend time teaching theory. As a result, Anojan utilized an instructional strategy that he thought was an efficient way of negotiating this structural constraint. However, when he was prompted to (re)examine the ways in which this teaching practice might shape student performance he joked, "if we give that same paper to them this week I don't think they will do well. Some of them would forget. They might forget some from 100 the answers I taught". Forgetting answers to 100 questions is a

plausible explanation. Anojan's comments underscored the ways in which he was constricted by a syllabus which he had no control over. He also highlighted the futility of his expectations of student performance. The result was that students engaged in activities that prevented meaningful learning from occurring.

Shifts Toward Transformative Praxis

In this section I draw attention to the ways in which teachers broadened their ways of thinking by engaging in reflection activities. These shifts were evident in the ways in which teachers began to question their own activities in relation to student activities. As they began reconsidering their activities, they became open to student feedback and recognized the reciprocal relationship between student and teacher activities.

Openness to Student Feedback An important outcome that emerged through reflection activities was that teachers began to be more responsive to student feedback. Teachers paid attention to student feedback by calling into question their well attuned practices. One such practice was reducing content (discussed in chapter 4). Based on students' comments teachers recognized the ways in which they sought to accommodate student ability levels by reducing content was not helpful to the students. Revathi said,

> But then again omitting what we teach creates another problem for the students because the exam paper asks bigger and more complicated questions from all the sections and they won't be able to answer them. Meaning the students will only be able to do half of the paper, the rest they won't be able to do it, because teachers have made their teaching appropriate for what the students can understand and do but the exam is the same for everyone.

Earlier Revathi vouched for the importance of reducing content, a well-attuned practice based on

her conception of constraints (i.e., student's low ability). Later, based on what students mentioned, she recognized this strategy was not conducive to students' exam performance. Ravindran who was also intentional in reducing content when teaching students in low-ability tracks noted:

> I understand what students are saying. They are right, teaching less content is not a practical solution in supporting these students. Because for the exam the lower division isn't going to get a lower paper, and the best division doesn't get another paper. There is only one paper for everyone.

Ravindran saw the relationship between reducing and omitting sections based on student's ability was not helpful in supporting students. He recognized all the students had to face the same examination which made reducing content problematic for students.

Teachers eagerly sought out ways in which to solicit students' point of view as opposed to relying on their well-established assumptions. Anojan said,

> I caught one of students the other day and said, tell me what is really going on, tell me why you are getting low marks? I asked him this question in front of his parents, he waited and after a long time said, I don't understand what the teacher is teaching. I learned he doesn't understand what that teacher is saying.

Anojan coerced the student to tell him 'what is really going on?' On previous occasions Anojan like his peers did not pause to ask students why they were struggling in class. As a result, punishments and insults were doled out to students and their parents with little regard for their points of view. By asking the student what was going on, Anojan showed that he made a concerted effort in soliciting the students' point of view. This showed teachers becoming flexible in blurring boundaries to contend with disjunctures that emerged in activity systems.

Likewise, teachers became open to receiving feedback on their instructional practices. Revathi said,

> Most often what happens is we do what we think is right, although what we are doing could be wrong, but we won't know that it is mistake because we can't see it. Sometimes students might identify these mistakes [I make] they may know about them, like they may think if the teacher said this then the lesson would have been even better, so if they say that, then I will try and correct that

Revathi did not shift her thought process out of the bifurcated wrong and correct teaching, yet she indicated student feedback can be used to improve her teaching activities. She explained, why student feedback was important, noting, "without their feedback I have to work under my own assumptions, which means I could be wrong. Then I won't know if the student understood my way of teaching". As a result, she said, "I expect students to tell me some things [about my teaching] so I can modify my explanation based on what the student in thinking". Revathi elaborated her limitations admitting that her assumptions 'could be wrong' signifying the importance of students sharing their point of view in improving her teaching. Here, seeking feedback was focused on ways in which teachers could use this information to improve their teaching activities emphasizing the reciprocity between learning and teaching activities. This indicated that she found the borderland, rife with possibilities for transformative praxis.

Similarly, Bhavani noted that student's feedback revealed expectations students had of teachers. She said, "I realized even students expect things from us, but I've never asked students what they expect from me as a teacher, if I know what they expect from me I think we could have achieved much more." By taking into consideration student viewpoints, teachers found that this exchange between student and teacher activities had the potential to make all activities

meaningful. She continued, “I must create those opportunities in class, so that students can share their expectations, what they expect from me as a teacher.” It is important to note that by soliciting student feedback, Bhavani recognized her responsibility in creating opportunities for sharing learning and teaching expectations. This in an important way in which the power teachers wield in relation to their students had the potential to be utilized toward transformative ends.

Teachers reconsidered the ways in which they disciplined students. Bhavani who earlier felt that the use of force was the only viable alternative to making students do their work, began seeing an alternative point of view. Considering this alternative point of view, especially by paying attention to student experiences she said “maybe because we are constantly, undermining them and humiliating I wonder if that is what is causing them to behave in certain ways” Bhavani recognized how teacher activities might be impacting student behavior, thus, she established the need for alternative practices. She continued, “I am wondering if we are creating an aggressive mindset in them because how we treat them, it could be that. I think the way we treat them might be too brutal and cruel to them and harming them quite a bit I think.” Considering the need for an alternative was engendered by recognizing student’s perspectives in relation to the ways in which violent discipline was used and its impact of their well-being. At this point, she did not have alternatives that could be implemented. However, she began to understand that formulating alternatives was imperative.

Ravindran who was known for his use of violence said, “using this fear tactic is not practical in all instances, it is not a valid way to do things in some instances”. He clarified, “we beat students up, that's all it is, it’s a punishment, other than that it doesn't really result in bringing the students into performing well”. Ravindran realized that using fear maybe mediating

student learning, something he denied earlier. He said, “because I know sometimes when we use fear, students forget what they know already. So sometimes, when they make mistakes, you know what happens is that it affects their thinking.” These realizations suggested Ravindran, like the other teachers might be ready to reconsider some of his practices by identifying how it harmed students and impacted their learning.

Reciprocity Between Student and Teacher Activities Earlier in this study teachers often relegated student learning (mostly indexed in exam performance) as something that was secluded from their teaching. Teachers seemed to view teaching as a set of activities that were somewhat disconnected to the ways in which students learned. Learning was a set of activities students had to pursue, regardless of how they were taught. For example, students needed to listen in class, take down notes, memorize material, work toward understanding content and perform well at examinations. An important outcome of this study was that teachers became increasingly aware of the reciprocal relationship between learning and teaching.

A significant shift toward recognizing reciprocity occurred when teachers acknowledged their complicity in student struggles. Ravindran who drew strong boundaries between his teaching and student learning earlier in the study, said this toward the end of the study, “as you were explaining [what students said] I was thinking that it is not the students fault alone, they are not fully responsible for their poor performance. There are problems caused by our side [teachers] as well isn’t it?” While Ravindran did not think outside the construct of ‘fault’, he did make an important shift in recognizing the relationship between teacher activities and student performance. In (re)examining his position, Ravindran comprehended that the poor performance of students might not only be about students and assumed (inherent) abilities or learning practices.

As teachers began to understand how their activities intertwined with their students' activities indexing the emergent understanding of reciprocity. Bhavani made a similar observation. She admitted that she had a 'low mindset' of the students because they were in the lower-ability groups,

> After we talked, I realized that everyone's capacity, abilities in class are different. You know miss, up to this point even I had a low mindset in the way I thought of these students, as they are low division. Because [I thought] they are all the same, you know, that they are in the low division, so they are, you know they all must be poor learners just useless students. I assumed things about them, but it seemed like not all of them are, like some work hard.

Bhavani realized that homogenizing student attributes based on the class they were tracked into was erroneous. She pointed out how these assumptions meant that she thought students were 'useless' and realized that contrary to prevalent notions these students had positive attributes such as working hard. She continued, "partly we are to blame for their poor performance, because there is definitely a connection, a correlation between how we think about them and how we treat them and how students perform in school." Bhavani became aware of a 'correlation' between teacher assumptions of ability, performance, and general treatment of students. This signaled a shift in how teaching and learning began to be conceptualized as reciprocal if not, an interconnected activity. This indicated a blurring of rigid boundaries between teacher and student activities.

In rethinking her situated knowledges and the ways in which they mediated teacher and student activities Bhavani commented, "now after hearing all that we discussed miss, I am wondering we should not be changing the students, but it might be better to change the teachers,

how we think and all." She went on to muse that it might be "more important to give the teachers some counseling so something like that (change the teachers)." Bhavani made two important observations that (a) all students in low ability groups are not the same and (b) learning and teaching are reciprocal activities in which 'fault' cannot be located only in the activities of the student (or the teacher). She began to dislocate fault-based, deficit discourses, and saw how teachers needed to be supported in ways that enabled them to address the limitations of their constructed situated knowledges.

Likewise, Revathi shifted her perspectives in relationship to the ways in which teachers-built relationships with students. By shifting her gaze toward reciprocity Revathi pointed out how teachers treated students based on their backgrounds may impact their learning. She said,

> Although the child's family might be problematic, we don't know all the details of their lives, everyone is not the same isn't it? Some maybe okay families too. So, when the teacher scolds the child based on the village and then expects the child to work in class or answer her questions, even if the child is ready to answer the question they won't do it.

Revathi noted teacher practices such as scolding based on where students lived (proxy for caste) disrupted student learning. She also admitted that despite students being evaluated based on the villages they come from, teachers homogenizing them was problematic. She recognized these practices had a 'strong negative impact'. While these realizations did not eliminate problematic assumptions about students' villages or their families, the shift acknowledged reciprocity. Ravindran who justified his 'no mercy' punishments and often did not see a direct relationship in how severe punishment mediated student-teacher relationships said, "the students are right to be afraid. Most often they can't do much about anything anyway. I know it affects the children

badly" This was the first time Ravindran associated his use of violent forms of discipline in class and its impact on students' learning. He clarified further, "during my lesson if I disrespect and insult a child, I know that even the next lesson the student will not be able to learn or concentrate. Nothing goes into their heads in situations like this". He recognized that they ways in which teachers engage with students does impacted their student engagement. Ravindran's ways of thinking about harsh punishment was profoundly different from his earlier statements. Notably absent in his reasoning was locating faults on students and or aiming to fix them "for their own good" as primary relationship goals. These shifts were important to note and appreciate as teachers began to reconsider the ways in which teacher and student activities are intimately connected.

Transformative Praxis in Action In this final section I discuss the ways in which teacher reflection and action (praxis) came together in important ways. First, I share the ways in which teachers began to formulate practicable changes. Then I describe the ways in which teachers implemented some of their decisions.

Formulating Practicable Changes Over time teachers began to formulate practicable ways in which to transform their activities. It is important to note that these formulations constituted complex negotiations that engaged both constraints and affordances from multiple perspectives. They shared the ways in which they can alter their instructional practices, something they felt they had more control over. For example, Revathi formulated an alternative way of teaching students instead of reducing content. She said,

> Instead of reducing what I teach or omitting sections, I can start by giving them many sums that are easy for the students to do and give those sums constantly. As they become better at that I can slowly increase the complexity of the sums step

by step.

Revathi continued to devise a plan that could be put into action which centered student learning. She continued:

> I must be careful not to make it too difficult too quickly. That might challenge students too much, if it's too difficult and they might not attempt anymore. Then the student will give up and then fall behind. But when they can do sums and when they see that they are actually able to do them, then they will become confident and try solving these sums on his own.

Revathi made multiple shifts when reconsidering her teaching activity. First, she did not resort to locating the problem in the student's ability or lack thereof. Rather she looked carefully at her own practice devising ways to make the content more accessible without reducing content, thus shifting her objective. She focused on improving students' confidence as a means of getting them to attempt complex sums. The onus of making these changes was now shared.

Bhavani thought of alternative ways in which to teach students content. She said:

> Now for example if we are going to teach them Grammar, I can explain somethings related to that, then I can give them some activities to do. I can use the activities and then focus on the main topic. I wonder if that would be more helpful to them? So, some activities would be of a higher standard and the rest can be systematically lower in standard but as they are ready they can attempt activities at higher levels.

Bhavani's thoughts about altering her teaching practices without reducing content was predicated on differentiating instruction. This entailed thinking of ways all students had opportunities to access content at their own pace while attempting complex tasks over time. Bhavani did not use

the concept of ability as an immutable situation, nor did she locate it as a deficit in her students. Rather, she recognized that in altering activities, students would be able to meet the demands of learning content.

Teachers also thought of formulating changes in terms of utilizing all available resources in navigating some of the structural constraints they faced like large class sizes. All four teachers shared important ways in which they could counter constraints they previously thought were intractable. Revathi noted, “I think we can talk to the administration and say, for the subjects there are excess teachers we can divide the classes and teach, then we can focus on a small number of students each and teach slowly”. Revathi pointed out how excess teachers in schools could be allocated reducing class sizes.

Bhavani noted the importance of creating spaces in school that were conducive for students to work on their own. She said, “we can make another space where they go to sit and study like a study hall, excess teachers can supervise these classes.”. Further she noted, “maybe another thing is that teachers can have office hours. If they, maybe they can have from seven to seven-thirty or say from one-thirty to two or based on the teacher’s preference, so students can meet us individually.” Bhavani and Revathi pointed out multiple affordances in their school systems such as human resources (i.e., excess teachers,), spatial and time resources (i.e., study hall, office hours), all of which could be reorganized in ways to support students in the low ability group. None of these suggestions required additional resources, but the reorganization of existing resources.

Tangible changes: Instruction In this section I point out concrete changes teachers made to their teaching activities. Considering the short duration of the study, altering their practices was most conducive in terms of making tangible changes. For instance, Revathi

modified one of her lessons toward the end of the study. Revathi's main complaint about her students was that they did not think in ways that would help them problem solve effectively. Over the course of the study, she realized that she created very little opportunities for students to think in her classroom. Based on this realization she said,

> I understand that we must make some way, we have to come up with some way to make these students understand, to show its related to their lives, I mean everything we learn if what they learn and what we teach are related to their lives then, when we say it the student will somehow face the reality and solve the problem.

Revathi considered ways in which she can engage students in her classroom to think about what they were learning. Revathi decided to try a different strategy that might support students think through Math problems. My observation notes for this class noted:

> The lesson was on probability. I noticed that Revathi did a few things differently. First, she slowed her pace in talking. Not only did she explain the lesson but this time instead of asking them to do the examples on their own, she goes through the example step-by-step. She also uses the White board more and teaches students two ways to calculate probability. Then she asks students to explain how they got their answers. She listened patiently and wrote down each other on the board. I seemed like Revathi was trying to figure out why the students who had the wrong answer got it wrong (Classroom Observation Revathi: November 9, 2017)

Revathi described the lesson this way,

> As far as those students were concerned if I immediately, if I respond saying that they are wrong then, then when I ask him the next time he will be reluctant to

> answer. So regardless doing the sum right or wrong I just wrote down the answer they gave irrespective of if it's right or wrong. I listened to why they got the answers, to some extent I was able to catch where they were getting confused. I kept them involved by letting them explain.

Revathi made a conscious choice to engage students in the lesson by letting them explain their answers. This was markedly different from her earlier strategy of asking questions off-guard to keep them involved in the lesson. Revathi's choice to alter her practice was reinforced further by the ways in which students engaged in the class. When I asked what she noticed about the students during that lesson she said,

> I knew they showed more enthusiasm and interest in this lesson. I knew that it was because they were enthusiastic about the lesson that is why they were responding back and forth. If they weren't enthusiastic they wouldn't have bothered to comment or anything, they would have remained quietly. I saw that they are drawing and quickly working out the answers. They explored alternative methods. So, all that showed me that they were interested in this lesson and thinking about how to solve the problem.

One of her main motivations to change her practice came from recognizing that she had to create opportunities in class for the students to think. In this example, she pointed out that this was successful because the students were contemplating 'can I draw it this way or that way?' In many ways, how students demonstrated their engagement shifted from being quiet to exploring alternative ways about thinking through problems. She recognized creating opportunities for students to talk about their learning made this experience meaningful to her and her students. This highlighted the reciprocity between learning and teaching, transgressing the 'I teach', 'you

learn' boundary.

Anojan also made significant changes to his teaching practice. Earlier in one of his written reflections he noted,

> I noticed while watching the video that the students were paying attention to what I was saying and listening, this made me very happy. But perhaps I could have drawn and demonstrated to them how to draw (instead of explaining). I didn't do this because I did not have time to do it (Written Reflection One: October 11, 2007)

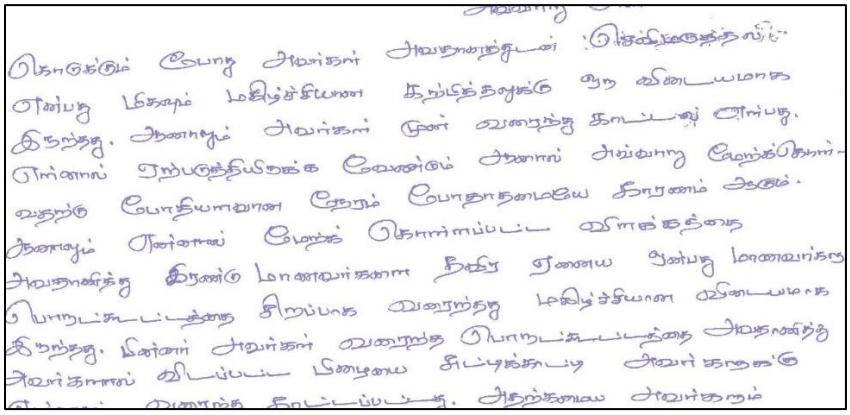

Figure 10: Anojan Written Reflection One

At this point in the study Anojan struggled with the lack of time. One of Anojan's main challenges was balancing his time between teaching art theory and drawing. Later in the study, Anojan decided to conduct his practical classes differently, so students experienced better instruction although time was limited. He described his decision to alter his teaching activity this way,

> Earlier despite explaining to them that they should not color the entire drawing in one flat color they didn't understand it. When I showed them what th final product needed to look like, they understood the instructions better and they had done it very well miss. This

method is a good one.

In explaining his method further, he said, “in this method I draw and do demonstrations then they catch the method. It is better than just telling them what to do over and over again, showing how it’s done helps them do better” Anojan intentionally demonstrated by drawing examples. He noted how showing students how to do what was expected of them was better that telling them what to do repeatedly. In this example Anojan expressed that he was satisfied his students’ progress due to the instructional change he made. Furthermore, he explained the importance of making changes in terms of improving student learning. He said,

> I thought, I have to teach slowly in ways that they understand, so doing that based on how much students understand is important and that I must do it that way. The feedback I saw in terms of what their products were after I taught making all these changes to my teaching, their work was very neat I realized that they have really understood what I was talking about.

By reflecting on their practices and coming up with strategies to improve their instructions, like Anojan the teachers in this study experienced positive changes in their classrooms. Teachers work under enormous constraints, yet by reflecting upon their practices, and focusing on students who struggled in their classes teachers were able to work within those constraints.

Tangible Changes: Disciplinary Activities Teachers reconsidered the ways in which the engaged in disciplinary activities. Teachers experimented with other forms of disciplinary actions that were devoid of violence. Revathi who typically resorted scolding students harshly described how she handled discipline differently. In this instance a boy and a girl were found to be in a relationship, which was prohibited in the school. She explained how she handled it noting:

> I called them and talk to them directly about the problem and cleared it out, I sorted out the issue and I let them go. I didn't use harsh words. I talked to them about the dangers of getting involved. I said it in a friendly way, but I was serious too.

Many of the rules enforced in the school and much of the disciplinary action taken was based on romantic affairs in school. Revathi, pointed out that instead of taking these students to the principal, she chose to talk to students about the problem directly. She mentioned that she purposely diverted from her modus operandi of scolding students in harsh ways. She mentioned she was friendly but was still able to explain the seriousness of the issue.

Similarly, Anojan who often beat up students as a form of punishment explained how he addressed student tardiness to morning class duty.

> Even today some came about five minutes late for class duty. I didn't beat them with a wire. I asked them why they were late, and they said the monsoon rains had flooded their houses. So instead of taking them to the principal immediately, I told them to go and dry themselves off.

The ways in which Anojan decided to handle this situation was markedly different from his earlier activities. Typically, when students were late even by a minute or two, he beat them with a plastic wire. The scars remained for days as I observed many times during my interactions with students. Instead of beating students up, Anojan paused to ask students why they were late. Monsoon rains were heavy during the time of the study and flooding was common. Often students were drenched when they came to school as umbrellas and raincoats did not offer sufficient protection from torrential rains. Interestingly, Anojan did not blame students, nor did he punish them. Instead he opted to excuse his students from morning class duty. Significant

differences in the ways in which teachers changed their disciplinary practices suggested that they were transgressing boundaries in ways that were transformative.

Conclusion

This study was constructed as a participatory design-based research project where intentional reflection activities were introduced as a part of the research design (Bang & Vossoughi, 2016). This study conceptualized the processes of transforming teaching and learning activities as expansive learning (Engeström, 2015). The learning that occurred expansively as demonstrated in this chapter shifted teacher's attention toward transformative practices brought to bear the full weight affordances and constraints within activity systems. The shifts toward considering alternative practices and implementing them was framed as expansive learning, because it mapped how teachers questioned accepted, attuned practices, and analyzed the situation by exploring "why" practices are constructed in particular ways (exploring boundaries). Attunement detailed regularities in well-coordinated patterns of social practices that helped participants engage in complex activities with some level of certainty. This resulted in defensive turns through which "actors learn to protect their routines and to avert and forestall the adoption of novel actions" (Nummijoki, Engeström & Sannino, 2018, p. 226). Discomforts teachers experienced were shaped by institutional affordances and constraints that socialized teachers to view their activities as rational and natural. Despite the underlying tensions that these activities caused it still required teachers to affirm the status quo (Greene, 1978; Skrtic, 2012).

Drawing from Anzaldúa's (1987) concept of borderlands, crossing boundaries did not entail crossing over completely, but being flexible in a space she called a borderland. Here teachers questioned their practices and situated themselves in an in-between space rife with ambiguity, fear, uncertainty, and a liberating feeling of possibility in their complex communities

of practice (Gutiérrez, 2008; Lee, 2017). Expansive learning did not occur automatically. They occurred because reflection activities which challenged the status quo were introduced (Nummijoki & Engeström, 2010). This process started by questioning surface realities in their teaching activities and subjectivities, a process of demystification, revealing the constructed nature of social realties and its potential for transformation (Engeström, 2015; Greene, 1978). Overtime as learners reflected it created dialectical processes in which teachers began reveal the transformative agency teachers possessed even amidst challenging constraints (Sannino, Engeström & Lemos, 2016).

Chapter 7:Discussion

"The most tragic form of loss isn't the loss of security; it's the loss of the capacity to imagine that things could be different"-Ernst Bloch

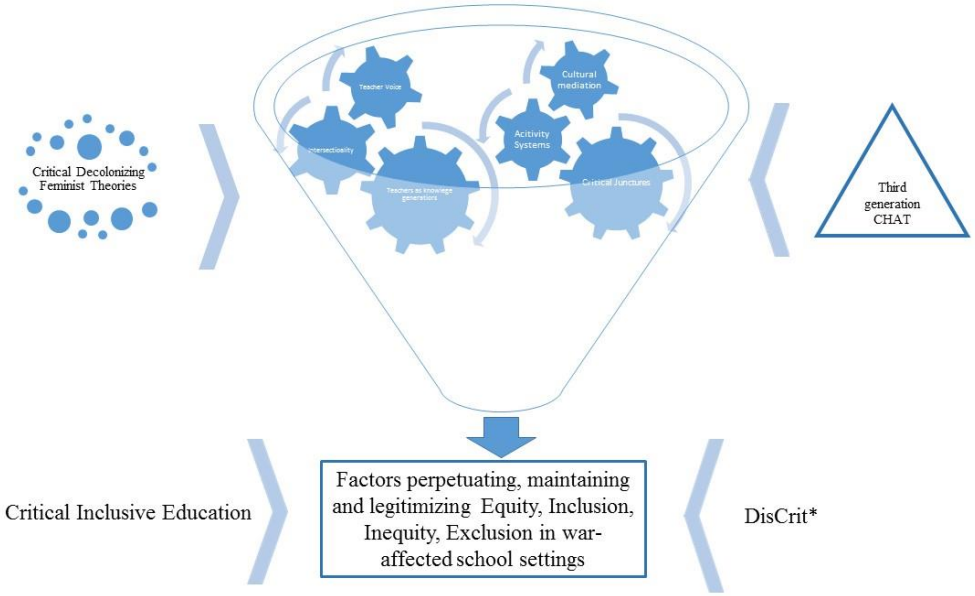

Figure 11: Conceptual framework

This study aimed to gain a deep understanding of factors that shaped the ways in which teachers understood themselves and their teaching activities in inequitable, exclusionary schools. This study focused how inequity and exclusion was perpetuated and maintained in schools, negatively impacting multiply-marginalized youth. More importantly, this study mapped the ways in which teachers engaged in critical reflection activities and generated knowledges engendering transformative praxis. Through the maps and our shared study, early signs of transformative praxis emerged that sought to disrupt inequity and exclusion.

The conceptual framework of this study (see Figure 1) was predicated on critical theories

that aimed to reveal the ways in which inequitable and exclusionary practices were perpetuated, maintained, and legitimized in war-affected school setting. Critical decolonizing feminist theories centered marginalized voices, recognized intersectional subjectivities, viewed participants as knowledge generators and rejected deficits-oriented perspectives. Similarly, third generation cultural historical activity theory explained how all activities in complex activity systems are culturally mediated and revealed they ways in which tensions and disjunctures shaped learning and teaching. In this study critical inclusive education and DisCrit helped theorize the ways in which inequity and exclusions worked in schools. For example, DisCrit unearthed the ways in which race and disability discourses converged in marginalizing students who navigate those intersections (Annamma, Conner & Ferri, 2013). In relation to this study, DisCrit showed how ability and caste discourses ways of marginalizing students. I weave the theories utilized in the conceptual framework in discussing the implications of this study.

In addition to the theories that formed the conceptual framework of this study, I introduce two supplementary concepts; concrete utopias and livable lives. These concepts enrich and enliven the ways in which the implications of this project envisioned transformative praxis. In this chapter, I discuss two implications: politicizing ability and justice-oriented praxis. These implications are re-rooted in present struggles, where hope is simultaneously situated and generative. This connection between now and the future offers possibilities that disrupt oppression and dispossession in school systems (Levitas, 1990). I explain each idea and discuss policy and practice implications. I conclude this chapter by discussing the limitations of this study.

Concrete Utopias and Livable Lives

In his magnum opus *The Principle of Hope,* Bloch argued for the necessity of concrete

utopias. Concrete utopias leverage hope that insist that all activities that work toward emancipatory are essentially ‘directing acts’ (1986, p.12). Concrete utopias are invested in possible futures that are imagined with an acute sense of awareness of the relational, historically situated, struggles of multiply marginalized collectives in the present moment (Muñoz, 2009). Concrete utopias guide the trajectory of transformations toward those futures. Concrete utopias are an important heuristic in understanding transformative praxis. Muñoz (2009) emphasized that for us to ‘see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present’ (p.1), we need to ask what does a transformed future look like? This question is vital because transformative praxis is neither benign nor neutral. Transformation brings the possibility of increased oppressions as well as emancipations, as such, it is a political endeavor (Bang & Vossoughi, 2016). Transformative praxis must contain the vision of a concrete utopia. It is something that is ‘not-yet’ but hoped for (Bloch,1986). It steers trajectories of human activities toward making the imagined future a reality (Muñoz, 2009). This imagined future is neither static, nor a destination. Rather it is a process of becoming that ensures humanization and the assurance of a livable life.

Concrete utopias represent an insistence that transformative praxis must be intentional toward emancipatory goals that make all lives livable. Judith Butler (2004) describes livable lives in relation to what she terms ‘normative violence.’ In Butler’s view, normative violence is coercive, invested in actively normalizing norms set in unequal fields of power. Normative violence is the product of rules and boundaries that police what can and cannot be done, whom one can be and not be and become. Collectives violating these norms are ‘unintelligible’ or ‘non-existent’ while paradoxically being subjected to violence and policing, incessantly coerced to conform. The type of violence she describes, ‘makes persons according to abstract norms that at once condition and exceed the lives they make and break’ (Butler, 2004, p. 56), thus making

some lives unlivable. Normative violence restricts ways of being and doing, and at its core defines the ‘parameters of personhood’ (Butler, 2004, p. 56). This is not surprising considering how personhood relies on beliefs ability normal human abilities (Kittay, 2002), where marking the ‘normal’ automatically demarcates the those who are not (Tremain, 2010). The violence enacted for breaking norms is not remarkable, rather, it is normalized and goes undetected by those who impose them while those who succumb, acquiesce to, or conform to normative parameters are granted access to livable lives. Those who challenge and transgress norms are exposed to incessant precarity and violence, making their lives unlivable.

Livable lives are not afforded to everyone as disability studies scholars and activists have noted (Campbell, 2015). DisCrit that informed the conceptualization of this study reminds us of the ways in which race and disability coalesce in pernicious ways that make schools unlivable spaces (Annamma, Conner & Ferri, 2013). Those who navigate intersectional inequalities are incessantly restricted and policed for non-conformity. Violence is discursively and materially enacted upon non-normative entities until they assimilate to the norm, failure to do so makes their lives unlivable. Disability activist Talila Lewis (2017) described the ways in which Emmett Till was brutally murdered because he was black and disabled at what she calls the most dangerous intersection. In 1955 Emmert Till a 14-year old African-American boy was murdered in Mississippi, after a white women falsely accused him of harassing her. Lewis used Emmert Till’s life as an example to explain how those whose lives are multiply-marginalized are essentially unlivable lives. Butler and Athanasiou (2013) describe this phenomenon as necropolitics, where power-brokered political decisions determine who lives and dies. For example, in this study, a student threatening to commit suicide due to being held back in a class reveals the necropolitics made some lives unlivable.

Drawing from Butler, Taylor (2013) notes “livable lives, are those that are included in (recognized within) norms. Non-livable lives are those that are excluded, foreclosed and rendered invisible” (para.17). As such livable lives can be partly described as ways of being and doing that resists assimilative norms and eradicate normative restrictions in ways that allow for a world that is more accommodating, recognizing the full humanity and personhood of people who currently live unlivable lives. Livable lives are made by what Talila Lewis (2017) calls disability solidarity. She asserts:

> Disabled youth of color living at the intersection he [Emmert Till] once occupied, these are the youth who continue to be profiled, criminalized, and killed for existing, they deserve to have their whole humanity affirmed. Disability solidarity saves lives and makes room for laughter, love, and freedom.

Concrete utopias in education require transforming day-to-day practices in activity systems such as learning and teaching so that they are geared toward engendering livable lives within and outside school communities. Concrete utopias and livable lives guide the emancipatory work of transformative praxis. For example, the school in which this study took place was established after active combat ceased in 2009. While learning and teaching activities resumed, the were built on the sediments of ideological and structural divides that perpetuated inequitable and exclusionary processes. If schools were reestablished based on concrete utopias that centered livable lives, one could assume that inequities and exclusions could have been minimized as a result of transformative praxis.

I pause here to clarify how I make explicit references to multiply-marginalized groups. The conceptual framework of this study was predicated on critical decolonizing feminist theories. Critical decolonizing feminist theories maintain that marginalized groups are not

steadfast, immutable entities (Collins, 2012; Spivak, 1988). Rather in differential fields of power marginalization shifts relative to those participating in activity systems (Crenshaw, 1991, Yuval-Davis, 2006). For example, in relation to education authorities, teachers in this study were marginalized. Simultaneously, in relation to teachers, students were marginalized. As such, the assertions I make do not make arbitrary distinctions between the oppressor and the oppressed (Spivak, 1988). In line with the conceptual framework of this study, whenever a distinction is asserted, it is situated in patterns of power mediated relationships, institutional arrangements, and historically enduring legacies of oppression. Perhaps most importantly, in relation to this project, distinctions are substantiated by empirical evidence discussed in previous chapters. Furthermore, in naming marginalized groups, I knowledge that in complex activity systems there are multiple marginalized groups as there are oppressive groups. In numerous ways, these groups exercise agency and resistance in relation to one another. What warrants the demarcations I make is in recognizing how power and politics mediate participants and their activities in any given context.

Politicizing Ability

Ability is politicized in concrete utopias. Politicizing ability is a radical project underlining critical transformation. Critical decolonizing feminist theories that shaped the conceptual framework of this study insist that depoliticized concepts (i.e., gender, race), lead to positioning some individuals and collectives as deficient. Politicizing ability strengthens the commitment to critical decolonizing feminist theories by revealing the ways in which inequitable, exclusionary could be disrupted by centering marginalized voices. Likewise, third generation cultural historical activity theory utilized in the conceptual framework of this study aimed to reveal the culturally mediated nature of teacher activities. Politicizing ability unearths the ways in which ability is culturally mediated teacher activities.

The critical theories that framed this study warrens the politicization of ability, refusing to reify its neutral stance in schools. Because ability is a political project it makes defining what ability is vacuous. Instead, I argue that ability is as ability does. Findings of this study warrants this indeterminacy because the participants never defined ability. Emphasizing 'ability is as ability does', recognizes the ways in which 'ability' animated teacher and student activities, rather than building esoteric definitions of ability. Schools are political institutions, yet ability that is valorized in schools is often positioned in depoliticized ways, abstracted from the power and the politics of decision-making eliding its situatedness. Politicizing ability seeks to reveal the power disparities and decisions that constructed its presence in schools. Politicizing ability seeks to demystify its depoliticized status within arbitrary nature-nurture continuums, making ability contours visible. This visibility reveals the ways in which ability is situated, sociocultural, historical in nature, and as such wields enormous power in shaping the trajectories of schools toward concrete utopias.

Ability Constructs Cultural historical activity theory that informed the conceptual framework of this study illuminates ways in which tensions and disjunctures occur in activity systems. Disjunctures discussed in this study revealed the ways in which teachers and students constantly deployed ability an entity located within a nature-nurture continuum. This was evident in the terms participants used to indicate the presence of 'ability'. Terms included competence, talent, smartness, capacity and capability, goodness, (superior) academic performance, superior socialization to name a few. All these references located ability with a nature-nurture continuum. For example, at times ability was constructed as inherent attributes N-disposable students possessed, such as superior intelligence. Teachers also saw ability as a set of performances related to academic performance, which constituted students doing their part by attending school,

studying content at home, soliciting teacher support. Ability was also viewed as a set of skills and knowledges students become socialized into through student's families and their communities. All these terms implied inherent or socialized aptitudes that make it likely for students to be successful in schools by participating in school ordained normative activities.

While ability was constructed within a nature-nature continuum, interestingly teachers and students did not bring up labeled, pre-packaged, western-centric views of disability in relation to what they viewed as inadequacies or the lack of abilities. Said differently, ability or the lack thereof were not named or recognized using discourses special education or inclusive education that required applying labels to variations in ability. Yet, their day-today activities were profoundly shaped by its embodied variations which often indicated the presence of ability, its inadequacy, or its absence. While disability was not invoked explicitly, its parallel, ability, was powerfully present perpetuating inequitable and exclusionary systems of oppression. Put differently, the normate or ideal student was the N-disposable students whose status was protected by who students were (i.e., belonging to high-castes) and or the normative ways in which they participated in school activities (i.e., high academic performance). Although the normate construct was present in this study, it was present in 'unmarked normative characteristics' (Garland-Thompson, 1997. p.7). Normativity was evident in relation to the indeterminate construct of ability which was expressed by the incessant will to normalize those viewed as outside the contours of ability (Garland-Thompson, 2005). As such, it was ability and its variations that animated inequitable and exclusionary practices and processes.

To be clear, like schools everywhere the school in which this study was conducted was involved in disciplining all its participants, shaping their subjectivities in ways that students become governable and productive citizens in a hyper-capitalist panopticon (Foucault, 1977). Thus, the

abilities schools valued were those that aligned with the disciplining purpose of schools. Specifically, these abilities allowed students to absorb skills and knowledge allowing them to occupy their worlds creatively and confidently, to be, to become, to produce and participate in meaningful ways, so long as they aligned themselves to the expectations set by schools and its disciplining technologies. The lack or inadequacies of these abilities pushed students to the margins, debilitating and dispossessing them, determining who did, or did not belong in schools (Erevelles, 2011; Puar, 2009).

Social orders constructed around ability were inscribed in student bodies (Bourdieu,1980) through punishment, placement in classes, academic supports (not)provided making the biopolitical nature of ability evident (Mitchell & Snyder, 2015). For example, instead of segregated special education units, students who were deemed to have subpar abilities were tracked into low-ability tracked groups, while the western 'gifted students' equivalent were tracked into the high ability-tracked class. These mechanisms showed how depoliticized notions of ability, safely couched in arbitrary nature-nurture continuums was pervasive in perpetuating inequity and exclusion.

Ability and Critical Disability Studies Disability is not the absence of ability (Campbell, 2015), yet school systems are known to collapse the two constructs in curious ways. The binary structures that demark ability from disability are based on medical labels that signal impairments in functioning, its embodiment, and its socio-cultural construction (Davis, 2013; Goodley, 2011; Siebers, 2008). Disability studies, which pushed back on pathologizing disability, has been enriched by feminist, queer, crip theories that resist normativity, reclaiming the ways in which disability is represented, examining its biopolitics and reinforcing its political agenda (Kafer, 2013; McRuer, 2006; Mitchell & Synder, 2015). Further, critical disability

studies reveal the ways in which disablement and debility are intentionally deployed on vulnerable communities through precarity, surveillance and violence (Erevelles, 2011; Grech, 2011; Puar, 2017). The third-world verses global center politics that shape the contours of disability have been discussed by critical scholars who highlight the violence enacted upon third-world communities that are disabled by Western agendas within and outside the academy (Grech, 2015; Meekosha & Soldatic, 2011).

Critical disability studies provide the impetus for politicizing ability. Ability is implicit in the ideal of normativity constructed in schools. In relation to schooling, disability critical race theory recognizes the ways in which intersections such as race and disability situate multiply-marginalized students in school spaces (Annamma, Cornner & Ferri, 2013), while feminist, queer, crip theories show how these formations become established (Puar, 2013). The 'ideology of ability (Seibers, 2008) ableism (Campbell, 2009), compulsory-able-bodiness (McRuer, 2006) are identified as a distinct form of violence, oppression, exclusion, and discrimination that is predicated on the ideal of normativity where those who are closest to its construction accrue power that dehumanizes and oppress those who are deemed furthest away from its center.

Critical disability studies reinvented itself with a critical edge that recognizes disability as a political construction focused toward making life livable to those who identify with its intersectional constructions. Goodley, Hughes and Davis (2012) explain "critical disability studies start with disability but never end with it: disability is the space from which to think through a host of political, theoretical and practical issues that are relevant to all" (p.x). These issues expose how indeterminate constructs like ability are deployed in school spaces. Specifically, in relation to schools, Leonardo and Broderick (2011), exposed the ideological construct of smartness as property. They described how smartness functions as property in

schools maintaining oppression. They stated, “smartness is not an inherent physical feature…we understand smartness to be a performative, culturally ideological system that operates in the service of constructing the normative center of schools and societies” (p.2227). These processes segregate those who are considered smart from those who are considered not smart, with material consequences that determine the trajectory of those who inhabit these constructed spaces. Building on this work, I expose the political construction of ability that animates school systems. Constructions of ability drive the ways in which school’s function, how participants engage in learning and teaching, thus exposing its features, revealing the nature of ability which animates learning and teaching activities.

Politicizing ability is crucial because ability determines who is allowed livable lives and who is excluded from it. In its essence concrete utopias are structured to ensure livable life for everyone in schools and communities, especially those who are marginalized at present. Politicizing ability is an act of reclaiming its criticality in ensuring that concrete utopias that guide transformative praxis keeps a keen eye on its powerful deployment. Concrete utopias that work toward ensuring livable lives requires that ability is jettisoned from it’s a-political neutral pedestal. Teachers and students shaped their activities around the construct of ability and its performances to meet an ideal futurity. These futures were predicated on producing themselves and their contexts in ways that made them successful participants in neo-liberal economic structures that placed the onus of success and failure on individuals.

The bodies and beings produced through ability-based activities are said to improve social mobility, economic viability, and sociocultural survival (Giroux, 2009). Teachers saw their work as connected to abilitating, capacitating some students by making careful decisions about resource allocations. These decisions based on ability were political. For instance, students

who were assumed to possess superior abilities were prioritized in the school system through re-organizing school resources in ways that made learning and teaching meaningful. Even students who experienced inequitable realities shaped their activities in schools toward meeting ability ideals, putting their unwavering faith in the construct of ability. For instance, students in the low ability-tracked groups were encouraged to 'study' more improving their access to ability to 'escape' the oppressions of low-ability groups. Students spent time and energy working toward this ideal, even though no amount of studying would have helped them score enough points to 'escape' from the throes of disposability.

Ability, Learning and Teaching Ability valorizes conformity toward regularity norms of schools. Therefore, learning and teaching, the primary foci in schools are preoccupied with ability discursively and materially. These preoccupations include organizing abilities, performing, sorting, and normalizing its presence. Despite its powerful presence in schools, the construct of ability in relation to learning and teaching is never fully theorized nor understood. Those in education recognize its performative aspects (i.e., high-stakes examination scores, IQ tests), they identify necessary skill sets (i.e., literacy, comprehension), and its value (i.e., social, economic mobility). School systems also recognize its absence (i.e., disability) and its uneven presence in students (i.e., average student).

Learning scientists have made great strides in explaining the nature of learning, teacher education has developed programs and curricula that improve teaching, but what constitutes the relationship between ability, learning and teaching is rarely discussed explicitly. This lacuna is indeed curious considering how student and teacher activities are animated by ability. Learning that I refer to is confined to school learning, a specific set of practices that prioritize specific of skills and knowledges situated within the institution of school (McDermott, 2015). The learning

that occurs in schools are commodified for consumption in the global capitalist market, signified by diplomas, and degrees that have exchange value in market economies that unevenly ensure social and economic mobility and the continuous accrual of social and other forms of capital (McDermott, 2015).

The congruent relationship between school sanctioned learning and ability becomes clear when observing how ability and learning are deployed in schools. Campbell (2015) stated "ability, employs a judgement that establishes standards of body and mind that are actionable in the present or in projected futures" (p.46). These standards of ability are venerated, instilled, and measured investing all available education resources on this construct, for it defines what it means to be 'educated' and 'able' in neo-liberal economies (Danforth & Gabel, 2006). Learning is viewed as a means through which to acquire these commodified abilities within established institutions. This justifies the need for schools, teachers, teacher education, education policy and many more related structures. Consequently, teaching is geared toward making specific types of learning possible and measuring its potency by ability measures such as test scores. When the return on the investment on ability becomes indeterminate, students are positioned as those who cannot learn, or do not learn. The preoccupation on the poor returns transmute in ways that locate the causes of disappointing results in students lack ability, its absence or sub-par status, and so the cycle continues. As a result, education policy and systems, political agendas, critiques of the teaching profession, and criticisms of teacher education abound, propelling yet another onslaught of reforms (Elmore, 1995; Payne, 2008; Souto-Manning & Winn, 2017). However, these theories of change underlining reforms rarely interrogate the politics of ability and its relationship to learning and teaching in schools, perhaps explaining why reform efforts don't stick (Apple, Au & Grandin, 2011).

Learning and teaching in schools are inextricably tied to the construct of ability, thus warrants a deeper examination of its features. The ways in which student and teacher activities in this study were organized were predicated on 'ability'. For example, students in this study were tracked based on the abilities they possessed or (did not). Students were susceptible to disposability based on how power brokers within the school system evaluated ability and allocated resources accordingly. The indeterminate nature of the construct shaped learning and teaching disjuncture and the co-construction of subjectivities. What students learned and how they learned, along with what teachers taught and how they taught was all predicated-on ability. A helpful way in which to understand ability and its relationship to learning and teaching is to recognize the ways in which ability is understood and deployed in school systems. A close examination of the ways in which teachers engaged in teaching activities is insightful in understanding this deployment. In this study ability was performed, here, ability was constructed as internal and immutable attributes, or a set of socialized competences marking individuals worthy of being taught.

Ability's relationship with learning and teaching engendered performances and products for individuals. Ball (2003) describes performativity as 'a technology, a cultural mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as a means of incentive, control, attrition and change-based on rewards and sanctions material and symbolic' (p.216). In this study, performances of ability impacted teachers and students alike. Teachers were subjected to oppressive accountability structures that insisted guaranteeing student pass rates in high-stakes exams. These performances were individualistic placing the onus on teachers to improve pass percentages, while there was little to no institutional support for teacher activities. Similarly, the onus of improving abilities and their own worth was placed on students, especially when

resources were intentionally depleted from them. In both these instances, notably absent was how ‘ability is as ability does’ when power disparities are rampant, obscuring the decision makers, power brokers, gatekeepers and institutional structures that shaped the contours of ability in relation to learning and teaching.

Ability was also individualized and took collectivities and the potential for activism away from its understanding. It has already been established that ability is not inherent, rather its performances are situated and constructed by socio-historical conditions which warrants the politicization of ability (Kozleski, Artiles, & Skrtic, 2014). Depolitizing ability, was evident when teachers saw activities as separate from student activities, or at most as a one-way transaction where teaching only improved already inherent or socialized abilities. For those constructed as not possessing ability or displaying inadequate abilities due to sociocultural factors such as caste, were deemed unworthy of teacher attention or care. Teachers were not being callous, rather the conditions under which they functioned drew clear boundaries between student activities and teacher activities. For example, teachers decided on their activities based on assumed abilities of students. Teachers reduced content they taught assuming students did not have the ‘ability’ to comprehend complex phenomena. This accommodation though well intentioned resulted in teachers altering their instructional strategies, attuned to the ways in which teachers decided to negotiate constraints in their activity system. Consequently, teachers viewed their teaching activities as beyond reproach, as such, teachers expected students to benefit from their teaching. When students did not reciprocate, teachers blamed students for their lack of abilities. Overtime, teachers reified their activities in ways that isolated student activities. Here teachers taught, and students learned (or not), making ability or the lack thereof the lynchpin that mediated the disconnect between student and teacher activities. The

depoliticization of ability allowed this disjuncture, maintaining inequitable and exclusionary processes.

Practice and Policy Implications Concrete utopias that steer transformative praxis toward ensuring livable lives, sees ability and its functions and performances in schools as political. Policies and practices that seek emancipatory ends can no longer be merely compensatory but anticipatory (Levitas, 1990). Meaning, practices and policies must be focused toward ensuring livable lives. Politicizing ability reveals how schools franchise some students toward access, participation, and opportunity and disenfranchise and devalue others based on power brokered decisions. Policy and practice implications requires that power and power brokered decisions that construct ability are exposed at every turn in schools. Teachers work under immense institutional, sociocultural constraints. Supporting teachers to develop professional skills and knowledges to successfully negotiate constraints in schools can no longer elide conversations on power and politics, particularly in relation to ability and its relationship to learning and teaching. Teachers in this study were competent, well-intentioned and did the best they could for students despite the structural and ideological constraints they faced. Yet many of the inequitable and exclusionary practices were maintained and legitimized because the political nature of ability and how it mediated learning and teaching was never acknowledged or exposed.

The construct of ability through undefined, included sharp edges that harmed multiply-marginalized students. As such, even when teachers were well intentioned in supporting students the ideological and institutional structure of ability, skewed their work in ways that reified oppressive systems in schools. Because the structures constructed ability was not exposed, often teacher efforts harmed students. For example, ability-tracking was viewed as a neutral and rational way to distribute education resources based on students ‘ability’. Yet the construct of

‘ability’ itself was unstable, sometimes measured by student grades, geopolitical place and or their social status (i.e., family financial status). When practices are constructed on unstable, undefined, depolitcized constructs like ability that leave the it’s political nature unearthed, all teacher practices predicated on them will perpetuate inequitable learning and teaching experiences.

Improving teacher practice requires that ‘ability’ is removed from its nature-nature dynamic and discussed as a political power-brokered construct that is situated in legacies of oppression. If teachers in this study were to be supported in ways that centered equity and inclusion in their practices, all teacher activities must be positioned in ways that reveal the political nature of ability, and how it mediates their work. Teachers in this study were competent. They knew creative and meaningful ways of teaching students. For example, Bhavani introduced fun activities as a means of improving student engagement, while Ravindran gave students unfettered access for students to contact him at anytime when they were confused with what they learned. But these exemplary activities were reserved for students in high-ability tracked, because it was assumed that their ‘abilities’ made them worthy of good teaching. Yet, the study exposed how students in the high-ability tracked group were protected due to their N-disposable status ranging from grades to family status. Meaning, the situated, political nature of the ways ability was constructed was obscured allowing disparities to abound in how ability was deployed, resulting in inequitable teaching activities. Put differently, teachers in this study were intelligent, resourceful, and competent, yet what they lacked were tools that exposed the political nature of their activities in relation to ability. As such, any reform in practice and or policy that is introduced in this school system must prioritize exposing the political nature of ability and its relationship to teaching activities and explicate they ways that make livable lives a tangible

possibility.

If teacher activities were to be positioned by politicizing ability, then teacher activities can be scrutinized by asking a set of questions that are typically not asked when supporting teachers to engage in equitable activities. For instance, teachers must be asked to reflect on how they construct ability, and how their views shape their teaching activities in their communities of practice. More importantly, teachers must be given many opportunities to interrogate power, how its distributed and constrained and the ways in which it mediates their decision making and shapes decisions imposed on them. This requires that the concrete utopia that we work toward do not carelessly introduce 'what works', 'evidence-based practices' 'best practices' or 'high leverage practices' into school systems as if schools are abstracted cultural and ideological *tabula rasa.*

Meaning, professional development activities can no longer be limited to introducing structures such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Response to Intervention or instrumental teaching methods that improve reading, mathematics, and other skill sets. While introducing new ways of thinking about improving student learning is important, in school systems that oppressive systems abound, each new concept must be introduced by intertwining critical reflection activities that ask questions about power and politics. For instance, if teachers in this study were exposed to UDL, it is possible that they will sharpen their current teaching repertoires. However, if UDL is introduced devoid of politicizing ability and its deployment, then teachers may not use this knowledge to disrupt inequitable structures but reify them. For instance, if UDL was to be implemented in an apolitical way, teachers might implement it in the high-ability tracks leaving multiply-marginalized students unable to benefit from it. A new set of 'what works' strategies will not disrupt inequity and exclusion unless, teachers are given the

opportunity to contend with whose needs are centered making explicit how power-mediated constructs of ability animate their teaching activities. Therefore, the goal is not to implement UDL with high fidelity and determine what worked (or not), but to determine how UDL promotes the political project of engendering livable lives for those who are currently dispossessed in school.

The conceptual framework of this study was committed to decolonizing research endeavors. Research that exposes these kinds of advanced ways of doing work necessitates decolonizing education research, mainly because teacher activities are a part of a colonial logics that dispossessed people groups and continue to do so. For example, in Sri Lanka (like in most once colonized countries), public education was introduced as a sorting mechanism where the best schools were reserved for an elite minority, while the majority languished in vernacular schools that provided inadequate learning and teaching opportunities (Handy, 2017). While compulsory education laws have now herded children into school buildings, the colonial logic of who is worthy of being retained and disposed still animates teacher activities. Therefore, it is the everyday practices that have endured through colonial legacies that must be scrutinized for its complicity with colonial logics that aimed to divide, sort, elevate and dispossess (Willinsky, 1998). Chatterjee (2012) notes that the work we presently engage in, "serves as a constant reminder that empire was not just about politics, the logic of capital or the civilizing mission but instead it was something that had to be practiced, as a normal everyday business, as well as moments of extraordinary crisis, by real people in real time' (p. xii). Thus, research must scrutinize the everyday business of student and teacher activities as a means of understanding its oppressive structures.

Tuck and Yang (2012) warned critical scholars to not use decolonization as a metaphor

that overlooks the real and symbolic violence in which settler colonialism (and other colonialisms) shape education discourses. Research is complicit in all colonizing projects, as such, conducting research in ways that politicize ability is already compromised (Grech, 2015; Smith, 2005). Tuck (2009) argues that decolonizing critiques often results in blurring the theories of change that are related to engagement, historicity, and purpose. Schools where legitimized practices of learning and teaching take place is mostly interested coloniality where domesticating individuals into external governance took precedence over their collective wellbeing. Patel (2016) argues that 'to counter the built up habits of coloniality' and 'to counter coloniality in education research that we must disambiguate schooling from learning, to foreground questions if what and whom to be answerable to (p.5), 'more answerable to leaning and knowledge' (p.7). Meaning, conducting critical reflection activities that expose the nature of oppression is inadequate; it must engender a theory of change that shifts material and ideological structures that disrupt inequity and exclusion. It must elucidate ways in which to re-organize school resources, practices, and processes toward emancipatory goals (Freire, 1980; hooks, 2014)

Research that accentuates the political project of ability must be answerable to those who are currently disposed and the educational debt that is owed to them (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Any research study that seeks to understand contexts and subjectivities (i.e., critical ethnography) or seeks to intervene in disrupting inequities or improving systems (i.e., intervention studies, design-based research), must locate its purpose on a theory of change that not only exposes current oppressions but theorize ways in which to transform these realities (Patel, 2016; Tuck, 2009). Meaning, exposing atrocities in schools that do not articulate a theory of change does not engender transformation (Tuck, 2009). This means that participatory action research, community-based research, design-based research all of which are currently upheld as

enabling critical praxes must make clear that its purpose is uncompromisingly political. Also, that it seeks to expose oppression and add to the knowledges that theorize how to challenge its material and ideological structures toward concrete utopias that ensure livable lives specially for those who are currently disposed.

Critical Inclusive Education to Justice-Oriented Praxis

Critical inclusive and special education was a way in which the conceptual framework of this study imagined the ways in which equity and inclusion was envisioned. The move toward justice-oriented praxis aims to build on these concepts and introduces alternate ways in which present understandings of critical inclusive education could be imagined. Inclusive education and its uneven practices around the world are mediated by a logic of including students (specifically those with disabilities) symbolically and physically into school spaces that traditionally excluded and dehumanized them (Slee, 2011). The question 'inclusion into what?' (Allan, 2008, p.48) has introduced the critical edge to inclusive education and its attendant pedagogies. Specifically, the movement of previously excluded bodies within school spaces as amounting to inclusive education has been criticized, pointing out its inadequacy in adhering to the spirit of inclusivity (Artiles & Kozleski, 2016; Naraian, 2017; Skrtic, 2005). Scholars from the global south have continuously critiqued Western, Euro-centric notions of inclusive education, especially its relationship to what constitutes disability pointing out how local logics and ways of being account for the multiplicity and uneven application of inclusive education (Kalyanpur, 2015; Slee, 2013). Justice-oriented discourses are implicit in critical inclusive education, yet its ends are rarely defined as justice endeavors.

Critical inclusive education conceptualized in this study centered equity as a means of ensuring access, participation and meaningful learning opportunities for marginalized students

who navigate the intersections of race, ability, linguistic diversity, disability labels, sexuality, gender, and poverty (Kozleski, Artiles & Skrtic, 2014; Naraian, 2017; Slee, 2011). Teachers are socialized into the work of inclusive education through teacher preparation programs, professional development, policy, laws, wholes school reforms and pedagogical innovations (Kozleski, Artiles, Skrtic, 2014). While these endeavors are commendable they are mostly predicated on finding ways of including students who are traditionally marginalized into spaces that constantly aim to transform in relation to meeting their needs. Needs that are seen lacking or differently 'abled' are exposed as means of providing supports. Although well-intention these end up conforming to original structures that maintain oppressive systems (Skrtic, 2005, Artiles & Kozleski, 2016, Annamma, 2017). Since the inception special education in the United States, this is evident in the disproportional representation of students of color in certain disability categories, where the labels applied to them shift over time foreclosing access to meaningful learning (Sleeter, 1986).

Building on this work, I argue that the concrete utopias we work toward must shift critical inclusive education's focus toward justice-oriented praxis. While justice discourses are implicit in critical inclusive education, justice-oriented praxis makes these commitments explicit and reveals its ultimate purpose as justice. Justice-oriented praxis has two important features: affirming marginalized voices as decision makers and valuing emancipatory knowledges. Both resist hegemonic moves that center the normalization of docile bodies in service systems of oppression (Foucault, 1977, p. 294). I acknowledge that justice discourses are problematic in political practice as they have caused the oppression, coercion, exclusion, normalizing and regularizing bodies through disciplinary technologies (Foucault, 1977). However, my invocation toward justice is rooted in critical, third-world feminist disability studies that work toward re-

ordering power structures that mediate social relationships and perceptions in ways that conceptualize justice as transformative tool that has the possibility of engendering livable lives (Garland-Thompson, 2005; Kafer, 2013).

Injustice ‘is constituted of unequal dynamics of power’ (Menon, 2004. p.205), that ‘inhibit or prevent people from participating in decisions and processes that determines the actions and conditions of their actions (Young, 2000, p.158). At the very basic level the justice is a set of practices and processes that improve participation in decision making in uneven fields of power. Justice in relation to livable lives, Butler (2001) said “injustice is not only or exclusively a matter of how persons are treated, how societies are constituted, but also emerges in quite consequential decision about what a person is, what social norms must be honored and expressed for personhood to become allocated (p.622). Thus justice-oriented praxis is predicated on restoring full humanity to those who live unlivable lives so that they can live and flourish by eradicating the violence of normativity.

Affirmative Decision-Making Power The conceptual frame work of this study was built on critical decolonizing feminist theories that insist on centering marginalized voices. Justice-oriented praxis introduces ways in which to conceptualize and activate centering processes. Justice-oriented praxis centers marginalized voices by recognizing and affirming marginalized collectives as decision makers. This acknowledges that schools in its current formation are situated in ecologies that are inequitable and oppressive. As such they are no longer positioned as natural, neutral, or good. In short, schools are seen as spaces that perpetuate and maintain injustice, simultaneously holding the possibility of transforming these realities. Affirmative decision making recognizes how current patterns of relationships, institutional arrangements and social perceptions are in place to maintain oppression of certain groups while enriching a

selected few (Minow, 1990).

Disability justice advocates and activists point out the importance of engaging disabled voices in shaping future trajectories (Mingus, 2013; Lewis, 2017). In doing so they do not merely ask for a seat at the table where they could influence decisions that impact their lives. Disability activist Mia Mingus (2013) argues that access as it is conceptualized now, only addresses the historical isolation of multiply-marginalized collectives. She asserts that mere access that ensures access to decision making centers does not engender justice. In other words, the opposite of exclusion is not inclusion, but alterity; an alternative way of participating in activity systems in ways that imagining makes livable lives possible for all (Johnson & McRuer, 2016). In an interview with EquitableEdication.ca Mingus (2013) warned how access can easily slip into assimilation, noting,

> It's not just about, how we expand the ranks of the privileged to include a few more people, it's actually saying, no we don't want to just expand the ranks of the privileged… it's actually saying, questioning that whole system and that why some people are constantly and perpetually at the bottom, right, and who never get included into that expanded ranks… there's nothing that has shown us that simply expanding the ranks of the privileged to add a few more people has actually led us to a more just world.

In essence she asks for a complete overturn of the current system, arguing that including disabled voices into an already oppressive system does not engender justice (Annamma & Handy, in review).

Critical decolonial feminist theories utilized in the conceptual framework of this study insisted on accentuating teacher voices. In line with this commitment, justice-oriented praxis pays attention to centering the voice of marginalized students and teachers in school in their

relative fields of power. Marginalized voices are not merely heard but given legitimate powers to make decisions. In addition, affordances are created to make resources available that are needed to establish and maintain the potency of those decisions. Merely giving marginalized collectives seats at the table to share their concerns is not the type of access that is imagined in justice oriented-praxis. Voices being heard or amplified does not engender equity or inclusion. The mere presence of marginalized voices at the table does not create mutual understanding nor does it overturn current systems that maintain oppression.

Meaning, justice-oriented praxis insists on affirmative decision making due to the ways in which internal exclusions work (Young, 2000). Internal exclusions occur when those who are marginalized are given a seat at the table, supposedly to deliberate, but are not given the power to influence decision making. No amount of deliberation will result in emancipatory ends, unless decision-making power is affirmatively distributed to marginalized groups. The failure to do so will repeat histories of oppression that leave marginalized collectives exhausted and more susceptible to violence.

The critical reflection activities in this study experimented making sure marginalized student voices were heard and acknowledged by teachers. I mediated an adapted version of the 'table' where student concerns were shared with teachers. However, this process was inadequate because it did not shift existing power structures. As a result, for example, even when contradictory evidence to what teachers believed was unearthed based on student experiences, teachers dismissed its legitimacy re-asserting their powers (Mills, 2007). This did not create opportunities for students to make affirmative decisions centering their well-being, because reflections did not redistribute decision making power. In the least, student voices were heard, but due to well-established uneven power dynamics that gave teachers more power to make-

decisions, radical changes toward disrupting inequities and exclusions rarely materialized. In the concrete utopias I imagine, affirmative ways of delegating power to the marginalized takes precedence.

By recognizing the situated ways in which oppressions in schools are perpetuated, maintained, and legitimized, those who are currently marginalized wield higher decision-making powers as a means of being accountable to the collective struggles in their communities. For example, in relation to this study this would entail dismantling ability based tracked classrooms. Then those who have been historically disadvantaged by being placed in the lowest ability group are given all the resources that were taken away from them in addition to new supports. This means recognizing the historical debt owed to them and their communities (Ladson-Billings, 2006). This also means the students are given power to shape teacher activities by making suggestions, introducing accommodations that work for them, and insisting that their knowledges are valued in improving teacher communities of practice.

When marginalized collectives are nominally included but have no power to influence decisions this does not engender livable lives. Thus, the proverbial table that seeks to bring all participants to deliberate on issues in democratic ways will internally exclude those who were historically marginalized (Annamma & Handy, in review). Devaluing marginalized voices while at the table deprecate their ability to make decisions that engender livable lives. Devaluation includes complex maneuvers. One that is most prominent is when advocates or those who have a vested interest in the well-being of those excluded speak for the oppressed, representing them in the ways that have little regard for the ways in which those oppressed want to be represented (Garland-Thompson, 2005; Skrtic, 2012). For example, teachers often highlighted varying students' needs and limitations to justify exclusionary settings. Students wo inhabited these

exclusionary spaces did not see themselves as incapable, as such the power teachers wielded in representing students erased students' complex subjectivities and their varied ways of participating. The foreclosure of decision making power, resulted in students receiving supports in ways that harmed their well-being.

Allowing affirmative decision-making powers recognize that those navigating marginalized intersections are positioned precariously. As such visibility caused by making their voices heard can threaten their already compromised wellbeing, increasing their vulnerability to violence. This points to the ways in which deliberative processes threaten marginalized communities. Therefore, any form of deliberation must offer robust protections to those who come forward to voice their concerns and participate in decision-making. Meaning, the table that marginalized communities are asked to sit at is already skewed, increasing their susceptibility to further violence (Butler, 2004; Erevelles & Minear, 2010). Concerns they share might make visible the ways in which they survive, by resisting and subverting current systems of oppression. This could be used as fodder for father marginalization and oppression.

Visibility and vocality in decision making processes increases the risk of violence enacted toward marginalized collectives both discursively and materially. For instance, in this study teachers often subverted oppressive accountability structures by complying with mandated rituals while teaching in ways that they thought benefited students. In revealing these realities teachers put themselves at incredible risks. Similarly, as I shared student perspectives with teachers, I had to work hard to protect student anonymity, by rephrasing their concerns or converting their critiques into questions. I had to be intentional about protecting students due to the precariousness that students negotiated in their day-to-day interactions with teachers. This does not mean that students and teachers were not agentic. Rather it recognizes constraints and

affordances that shape agentic moves are situated in asymmetrical power relations that have material consequences even when marginalized voices and their ways of being are included in decision-making (Handy & Kozleski, in review).

Providing protections and resources to make decisions cannot be predicated on deliberation as the only means of realizing livable lives (Young, 2000). In relation to this study, deliberation would result in teachers using their legitimate authority to steer the conversation toward what they believe to be important and right (Skrtic, Sailor & Gee, 1996). For instance, in this study if teachers and students from low-ability groups were asked to discuss their concerns and make decisions about teacher activities; this might result in teachers using their legitimate powers to shape decision making, deploying well-established discourses of professional expertise, cultural formations of respecting teachers and invoking evidence of poor student socialization. Furthermore, these processes will be easier to execute due because of stereotype threats and internalized oppressions students are socialized into, threatening their own well-being if resisted. Deliberation as a fulcrum with all its emancipatory protentional will only work when marginalized collectives are given affirmative decision-making power, and the resources and protections necessary to implement them.

Valuing Emancipatory Knowledges Critical decolonizing feminist theories that shaped this study positions teachers and students as knowledge generators. Concrete utopias that aim to create livable lives are predicated on present historical struggles. Collectives engaged in present historical struggles produce knowledges that are emancipatory. They produce the knowledges that could guide transformative activities that lead to concrete utopias. Unfortunately, these knowleges are erased and devalued at present leaving oppressive systems intact. As such, justice-oriented praxis purposely values knowledges produced by those who are historically

marginalized. Meaning all knowledges produced in power laden activity systems are not valued equally in justice-oriented praxis. The knowledges produced by those engaged in anti-oppression are prioritized intentionally.

Justice-oriented praxis acknowledges that knowledge (what we know, how we know what we know) and what is valued as 'knowledge' is hegemonic (Collins, 1986). Critical feminist scholars have warned us of the importance of viewing knowledge as pluralistic (hence the term knowledges used throughout this study) (Harraway, 2001). The pluralistic understanding of knowledges is a counter hegemonic move that recognize the value of knowleges produced by subalternaized communities that have been exposed to multiple forms of epistemic and material violence (Collins, 1986; Spivak, 1988). The pluralistic notion of knowledges further clarifies what Foucault (1977) called power/knowledge; whatever can be known is situated on power positions and power interests.

Recognizing pluralistic forms of knowledges prioritize marginalized knowledges in their imaginings toward concrete utopias. For instance, in this study teachers used their knowledges in hegemonic ways that devalued knowledges produced by marginalized students. Teachers engaged in instructional practices they deemed were appropriate for students (i.e., rudimentary repetitive tasks). Students emphasized that these instructional methods were not conducive to improving their test scores. Student knowledges produced nuanced understandings of how teachers could improve their instructional repertoires. Unfortunately, teachers often devalued and dismissed their knowledges us unworthy of being considered. By devaluing marginalized knowledge systems of oppression continued to persist.

Emancipatory knowledges prioritized in justice-oriented praxis does not valorize solidarity that is situated within the continuum of consensus and compromise. In asymmetrical

fields of power some values and practices stand in complete opposition to others, as such are irreconcilable. Justice-oriented praxis is not anti-solidarity but recognizes that solidarity toward concrete utopias occur in highly contested spaces, as such must 'affirm present struggles' (Lewis, 2017). Tuck and Yang (2012) elucidate "solidarity is an uneasy, reserved, and unsettled matter that neither reconciles present grievances nor forecloses future conflict" (p. 3). Here, any move toward compromising or consensus is held suspect, in recognizing what Erickson called 'the dark side of collaboration' (Erickson, 2006, p.10).

Holding consensus at bay is intentional, understanding the danger of consensus in re-introducing oppressions in less explicit forms. For example, caste-ideologies shaped the ways in which teachers understood the full humanity of students. Beliefs about untouchability and pollution shaped how marginalized students were viewed, but they were not spoken about openly. Yet, teachers recognized how these ideologies discriminated students and made choices to not engage in discriminatory practices. This could be viewed as a middle ground approach that recognized oppression and actively sought to mitigate its consequences, where teachers used their decision- making powers to determine students' well-being. However, this compromised position did not dismantle oppressive systems.

Instead of outward discrimination, compromise transmuted into less obvious activities which made it more difficult to detect its presence while the material and discursive violence enacted was acutely felt by marginalized groups. For instance, teachers in this study did not discuss caste ideologies openly, instead they used proxy terms referring to the 'areas' these students belong to, describing them as 'filthy'. As a result, scolding students openly based on the area they belonged to was clearly marked as discriminatory. However, exercising violent forms of punishment to 'fix' and 'correct' their inferior inherent and socialized ways of being (still

based on student backgrounds) were justified as activities done for students' own good. Caste-based ideologies have no middle-ground approach that could sanitize its existence let alone justify it. Caste-based ideologies are incompatible with justice-oriented praxis, as such radical moves to actively dismantle caste-ideologies is the only way forward. The emancipatory knowledges that allow for this non-compromising disruption is produced by those who are currently marginalized. As such, the power, and resources to disrupt this ideological structure must be affirmatively given to those who are marginalized.

The concrete utopias in which justice-oriented praxis is centered creates emancipatory knowledges that release choke holds that make students and teachers solely responsible for emancipatory learning and teaching. Meaning, it resists individuation, a vestige of coloniality that erases the value of collectivities that value interdependence (Lugones, 2010). The responsibility of assimilating into inequitable and exclusionary school structures were placed on students by ignoring nefarious ways in which school processes and practices made academic success impossible. In this study, teachers often placed the onus of academic success on students. For instance, students in low ability-tracked groups were implored to work hard despite foreclosing support systems necessary in improving their academic performance. Students were asked to take personal responsibility for their success. Similarly, teachers were responsible for producing successful examination results. Individual teacher competence was evaluated based on student performance, as if teachers exclusively mediated students' success. In negotiating these impositions teachers and students turned to the individualized indeterminate constructs of rationality and neutrality rather than seeing their activities as collective endeavors.

Individual ownership for success and failure made some students susceptible to disposability while maintaining disjunctures in student and teacher activities that reified inequity

and exclusion. The onus placed on teachers and students were individualistic, obscuring the contextual factors that shaped these activities and the ways in which teacher and student activities were inextricably linked. This resulted in teachers and students bearing the burden failure and success in atomized decontextualized ways reifying inequitable and exclusionary practices. Emancipatory knowledges produced and valued in justice-oriented praxis reveals the ways in which power relations within activity systems mediate 'academic success' or 'failure' by recognizing that they are collective, interdependent activities, rather than individual responsibilities.

Practice and Policy Implications Producing competent teacher practitioners are typically predicated on activities that focus on improving professional skills and knowledge (Darling-Hammond, 2004). These endeavors seek to improve instructional practices that generate meaningful learning experiences for students (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). Teacher activities are framed in numerous ways such as cultural work (Kozleski & Handy, 2017), emancipatory (Freire, 1980), and transgressive (hooks, 2014). They imply justice oriented-praxis, although rarely framed as such. This fault line makes it possible for teacher activities to default to its usual patterns of improving student abilities and remedying assumed deficits in abilities. Justice-oriented praxis frames teacher activities as a justice-oriented project that accounts for conditions the enable livable lives for those who are currently marginalized by the school system. Meaning, teachers are not only interested in improving access, opportunity, participation in meaningful learning by allowing redistribution, representation, and recognition (Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013) that critical inclusive education asserts (Waitoller & Artilles, 2013; Waitoller & Thorius, 2015). In addition, they situate their understanding of their own subjectivities and activities by evaluating if their ways of being and doing ensured livable lives

for their students, allowing them to be and become devoid of coercion and assimilative impositions.

Teachers in this study understood fairness based on doing the right thing for their students. Teachers accommodated the 'needs' of students in the lower-ability tracked groups by reducing content. Teachers saw teaching strategies that reduced content as an important practice in terms of ensuring students pass examinations meeting minimal competency standards. However, students who were recipients of these accommodations shared how reducing content harmed them. The implication of this understanding based on critical reflection cannot be a decision limited to if content should be reduced or not or finding a viable way to circumvent this conundrum. Rather the transformative aspect must ask questions about justice predicated on access, participation, and opportunity (Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013), that allows for livable lives. This entails asking a set of questions that include how to improve access to learning for students who are currently struggling to engage in the large curricula expectations. Justice-oriented praxis encourage students to describe the ways in which support could be shaped, allowing students to evaluate the potency of a strategy or its futility. This entails seeing the ultimate goal as ensuring justice that center marginalized voices, where those voices determine if their lives are being made livable, instead of pontificating on the validity of their worldviews. By paying attention to students, teachers were able to think of ways in providing these supports. For example, teachers suggested that the school had excess teachers for Math but no space to teach. They described how excess teachers could be assigned to study halls where students could do their work, while teachers are able to help. In this example, teachers were engaging in justice-oriented praxis that centered their student needs and not their deficits, thus improving teacher activities.

Considering the ways in which education reform often leave teachers out of decision-

making processes highlights the relational fields of power within which teachers work (Payne, 2013). Communities of practice in schools are often seen as implementors of policy reform efforts than decision makers (Payne, 2013). As a result, reform efforts often falter as teachers resist changes they deem irrelevant. For example, in this study the education reform efforts that are ongoing, revised curricula to make learning and teaching more activity oriented. Teachers were equipped with multi-media resources, training programs and new accountability measures all of which was aimed at improving student learning. However, none of the teachers who participated in this study implemented these activities. In fact, many of them actively resisted these policies. They participated in rituals (i.e., writing lesson plans) but did not change their activities in meaningful ways. Teachers mentioned that these reforms were introduced by international NGOs, professors in universities and education department officials who did not know or care about the local contexts in which they taught. Teachers felt they were left out of decision-making processes. When teachers resisted, education authorities tightened their grip on accountability by making these processes coercive, such as humiliating teachers and school administrators at district meetings. Even efforts that were geared toward improving student learning faltered and became oppressive because none of these efforts were justice oriented.

Justice oriented-praxis recognizes that teachers engage in communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). These communities of practice do not preclude student activities, making student activities an essential part of the community of practice. Thus, conducting training programs or reform initiatives that target teachers specifically and students separately is not a viable option in justice-oriented research praxis. For instance, education research typically focuses understanding pre-service or in-service teachers. Furthermore, all reform and practice interventions target changes teachers should be making to improve their repertories of practice.

Ball (2003) highlighted that research trends require to not only alter what they do, but to change who they are. He stated, “teachers are represented and encouraged to think about themselves, as individuals who calculate about themselves, ‘add value’ to themselves, improve their productivity, strive for excellence and live an existence of calculation’ (p. 217). This neo-liberal professionalization further reifies their expertise, obscuring its limitations in dismantling inequitable structures (Skrtic, 1991).

In this arena, on the one hand, inclusive education research invests incrementally in methods with which traditionally marginalized students could be included through classroom practices and policy reforms. This incrementalism fortifies teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to practice ‘inclusion’ within continuums of support (Slee & Graham, 2011). Students and their activities on the other hand are researched separately often evaluating the use and value of inclusive education in supporting meaningful learning. As a result, research endeavors that seek to improve inclusivity and its variations may contribute to ideological and material divides between learning and teaching as connected but separate activities. While research is often conducted in ways that reify this separation, education research geared toward justice-oriented praxis seeks to disrupt the borders that demark teacher activities as distinctly different from student activities.

This study was conceptualized as a participatory design-based research project (Bang & Vossoughi, 2016). Teachers were the primary participants of this study, while students in low-ability tracked groups were positioned as secondary participants. The purpose of the study was to understand what mediated teacher activities and their subjectivities by engaging them in reflection activities. Parallelly, students also participated in this study by reflecting on their own activities and teacher activities. As the study got underway, it was impossible to separate teacher

activities and student activities or prioritize one over the other. Their activities were inextricably connected, and as such students were no longer secondary participants but paralleled teacher participation. Themes that were revealed in this study such as disposability, disjunctures in learning and teaching and, the co-construction of subjectivities could not have been produced if students were not prioritized as much as the teachers. I do not aim to offer prescriptive ways of conducting research and whom researchers should prioritize in their work. Rather, I argue that research that is focused on justice-oriented praxis must work toward dismantling arbitrary boundaries between teaching and student activities and highlight interdependent realities.

Limitations of the Study

This study had several limitations. I describe the nature of the limitations and then explain the ways in which I sought to mitigate its consequences. None of the limitations discussed below threatened the validity of the study nor did they compromise interpretations. Nonetheless, these limitations shaped the dissertation project in important ways.

Lacking the Weight of Time This study was conceptualized as a design based participatory action research (Bang & Vossoughi, 2016). The methodologies used in this study included ethnographic methods and participatory action research where teachers engaged in critical reflection activities. I used several ethnographic tools in this study that included observations, interviews, focus groups and field notes. I spent three months living in the area where this study was conducted and attending school every day. Had I been able to extend the study over a longer period, I may have seen more than emerging evidence of shifts in how teachers understood their work, their identities, and their power as well as that of their students.

The weight of time enriches the ways in which data is gathered and interpreted, allowing

tools such as interviews to interrogate multiple layers of meaning. It was impossible to track nuances and changes that were ongoing at the time of the study and interrogate historicity. For instance, I conducted several interviews with each focal teacher. Each interview revealed new layers of meaning making and understanding, however, there were many layers I could not unpack due to the lack of time. Similarly, I made copious notes of what I observed in schools and classrooms but did not have the time to explore what some of these practices meant. For example, my field notes documented ways in which teachers engaged with families. Often these interactions took interesting turns. One time a grandfather of a student cried, pleading with the principal to allow his grandson to remain in school. This incident was alarming and heartbreaking to watch and record. I heard from other teachers that this was a common occurrence in school. Yet, I could not find opportunities to discuss this incident with the principal. While I compensated for the lack of by increasing the type of data sources I collected, it was inadequate to realize the full potential richness more time in the field could have offered.

Although I indented to offer thick descriptions that invoked the true complexity of all the events that took place in school (Geertz, 1984), the constraint of time necessitated that I prioritize some events over others, while ignoring other factors that might have yielded a fuller understanding. The security situation deteriorated rapidly during the study. As a result, my ability to engage with other students was limited to schooling hours. For instance, curfews were randomly declared, making it vital that I limit my hours in the field between seven in the morning and three in the afternoon. In prioritizing the purpose of the study, I utilized most of my time with the four focal teachers and the forty students who participated in this study. I was not able to engage fully with students in high-ability tracked groups who may have provided more information on the factors that determined their learning trajectories.

Reifying Individualistic Views Disability activist Mia Mingus warns us of 'myth of independence' (February 2011), which reifies the views of autonomous individuals by which relationships that are intimately intertwined are obscured. During this study I engaged teachers and students in critical reflection activities. I used video recordings as a catalyst to encourage teacher and student reflections. I conducted focus groups with the students and individual interviews with the teachers. A limitation of this process was that I may have unwittingly reified individualized ways of thinking about teaching activities. The videos focused on teachers and their activities. During initial reflection activities teachers found it difficult to focus on their practices. Instead they paid attention to student activities. I was cautious not to make videos an additional surveillance through which teachers scrutinized student activities more closely. Therefore, I re-directed teacher attention on to teacher activities by asking teachers to focus on themselves. As a result, I may have reified boundaries between student and teacher activities by encouraging teachers to hyper-focus on themselves.

This reification and teachers own hesitancy in paying attention to their teaching activities required that I intentionally shifted teachers gaze toward themselves. As a result, this intra-micro view limited the ways in which teachers could take account of factors outside themselves that mediated their teaching activities. Furthermore, in terms of transformation teachers formulated changes in their own practices and implemented them in their classrooms. While these experiences were important, they unintentionally placed the responsibility of change and transformation on teachers. The ideal outcome would have been where teachers thought structurally about change than individually, understood the complexity of their activities, and shifted their strong beliefs and assumptions that perpetuated inequities and exclusions. While teachers made important shifts toward these goals, the intense focus on teachers and their

activities individualized reflections in ways that created an uneven shift that placed teachers as the most significant lever of change. In reporting and interpreting the data, I risked blaming teachers for some of the most oppressive practices, while inadequately interrogating sociocultural, historical, and political factors that shaped their subjectivities and their activities.

Communicating Across Divides Challenges I faced during this study pertained to negotiating my positionality in relation to the participants in this study and the academic demands of a dissertation study. My positionality in relation to the students and teachers in school were well thought out before I conducted the study. I was aware of my privileged positioning in relation to teachers based on my educational status, my relationship with education authorities and other geopolitical and biopolitical factors such as caste identities, economic status and being of mixed ethnicity. This study created opportunities for me to interact with teachers and observe them consistently and constantly. Initially, the our differential positionings made the interviews formal and distant. Teachers treaded cautiously about what they said and how they communicated with me. Likewise, I limited my conversations to the questions in the protocol. As the study progressed, teachers became more comfortable in revealing their thought processes and explained the ways in which they made meaning of the complexities of teaching in war-affected schools. Yet, I was somewhat constrained by the purpose of my study, that required that I question teachers on their problematic practices. This caused discomfort at both ends, as the pace of the study was asynchronous with the level of comfort we built with one another during the study. For example, the reflection interviews may have been conducted at times when teachers were not yet fully comfortable with me. I noticed that in the final interviews that were conducted at the end of the three months teachers shared some of their inner most fears and joys more comfortably than in earlier times. The asynchronous timeline mediated my relationship with

teachers and may have limited the type of information teachers shared with me.

Building relationships with the youth that participated in this study was a much smoother process. The novelty of having an outsider in their midst who was interested in talking to them and hearing their points of view made youth that participated in this study more open and at ease with me than teachers. Perhaps, this was because I was already familiar with some of the students in this study, having conducted a study with them two years prior. Furthermore, most of the students' families knew me and trusted be because the professional relationship I maintained with their communities at the end of the war. Students shared their concerns, fears, and joys openly even in early focus group interviews. They would talk to me during their free periods and school interval breaks. As such, I had many opportunities to interact with them outside the formal focus group interviews. While this is not a limitation of the study, it did make it limited my ability maintain a balance between teacher perspectives and student perspectives, and more importantly remember that this study focused on teachers. Often, I was intensely troubled by the experiences students shared with me and I felt the urge to confront teachers in premature and intimidating ways. I quelled this urge by reflecting on my own positionality and the power I possessed in shaping the ways in which teachers interacted with me. I was acutely aware of the many ways in which I can compromise trust between the teachers and myself. Although, I was able to maintain the trusting relationships I was building teachers throughout the study, the seepage of my discomfort was evident in our reflection interviews. Toward the end of the study, I noticed that I had focused intensely on highlighting the negative aspects of teacher activities and its impact on students, partly due to the intense need I felt in remedying injustices students experienced.

Communicating across divides limited this study due to the cultural and geopolitical

barriers of conducting research in the global south, for the consumption (at least in terms of completing a dissertation) of a western-centric academy. The entire corpus of data was translated from Tamil to English. While trustworthiness was ensured by conducting backward and forward translations, and discussing concerns with native Tamil speakers, the essence of some of the teacher quotes were lost due to the inability to translate ideas even though words were. There were phrases teachers and students used to communicate deep ideas that would not make sense if they were translated directly into English. For instance, Bhavani used the phrase Pēy Katalaam, when directly translated means showing the ghost, which made no sense. The phrase meant hoodwinked or cheat which I used in the translation, yet the deeper meaning was that whoever was hoodwinked was gullible, which the word hoodwinked did not capture in full essence. Similarly, all four teachers used the idiom, 'Viṭiya viṭiya Rāmāyaṇam' (daily recitations of the epic poem Rāmāyaṇam). This idiom meant that no amount of teaching or repeating resulted in students understanding content or what was expected of them in school. The root of the idiom is related to a similar situation where despite teaching the Rāmāyaṇam[8] every day until dawn, when students were asked to explain the relationship between Raman and Seethai (husband and wife protagonists in the story) they replied Seethai was Raman's niece. This expression could not be translated, but its implication was, as I negotiated language divides.

There were limitations in writing up the findings using teacher and student quotes. Language conventions in the area in which this study took place were often circuitous. Typically,

[8] Rāmāyaṇam is an ancient epic poem from 5th century BC, where king Raman, rescues his wife Seethai from a demon king Raavanan who happened to be from ancient Sri Lanka .

the context of the point they were trying to make was emphasized and explained before making a declarative statement. For example, in describing their discipline practices, teachers provided ample details about the context in which they disciplined students before explaining how they enacted these practices. Transferring this language convention into English meant that most quotes were blocked because a single idea was contained within multiple phrases, violating the subject-verb, declarative clarity required in conventional academic writing. Finally, regardless of my critical, third-world feminist, post-colonial sensibilities, the fact that I conducted research in a marginalized third-world space for the consumption of the hegemonic western academy I participate in was not lost on me (Smith, 2005). I recognize my complicity in the neo-colonial project of western consumption at the expense of third-world knowledges. Although I am certain of the potential contributions this study will make in improving schools in war-affected Sri Lanka, these outcomes pale in comparison to the fact that the fruits of this labor will and always disproportionally serve me and my academic status within the western academy.

Conclusion

The implications of this study were framed using Bloch's (1961) concept of concrete utopias, that imagines equitable, livable futures that are grounded in present struggles of marginalized collectivities (Muñoz, 2009). I highlighted the importance of politicizing ability and justice-oriented praxis as transformative levers that could steer schools and communities toward concrete utopias. Practice and policy implications of these levers were discussed. I concluded this chapter by highlighting its limitations and the ways in which I sought to mitigate its consequences.

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Appendix A

Key Terms

Coloniality: Recognizes the pervasive influence of imperialistic forces which continue to oppress formally colonized spaces. This recognizes the ideological hold of colonialism even when nations were 'liberated'.

Decolonizing: Is a constant iterative process that challenges the western-centric hegemonic world view on structures and institutions

Equity: Processes and practices that meet specific needs of specific communities

Historicity: Recognizes the historical lineages that shape present contexts

Intersectionality: Recognizes differing social locations created by identities, social and institutional structures that work in complex ways to privilege and marginalize.

Knowledges: The plural positioning of this term recognizes that there are many forms of knowledges generated in opposition to Western centric knowledge systems that reify hegemonic control over what is typically positioned as Knowledge.

Modernity: Includes processes and practices that are deemed progressive and important, a new iteration of colonialism that positions non-western societies as backward

Multiply Marginalized: Recognizes that individuals and their communities are oppressed by multiple identities and structures simultaneously

Transforming/Transformative Praxis: The practice of reflection and action where teachers evaluate their actives and identify ways in which to change their activities in advancing equity and inclusion

War-affected schools. Includes schools that are situated in places of ongoing conflict, or in places where active combat has ceased typically described as post-conflict

Appendix B

Teacher Interview Protocol

Questions	Probes
1. Tell me about yourself	• Tell me about yourself (basic demographics) • Tell me about your family • Tell me about the area/village/town you are from • Tell me about your life before, during and after the war
2. Tell me about your schooling experiences	• Tell me about your experiences as a student • Tell me about your school: teachers, peers • Tell me about the challenges and successes you faced as a student
3. Tell me about your teaching experiences	• Tell me about how you came into this profession • Tell me about the students you serve • Tell me about the teachers and administration of this school • Tell me some of the challenges you face in teaching students who struggle: Who are they, and why do you think they struggle? • Tell me how you think about yourself as a teacher? • Tell me how you engage in your teaching activities? • Tell me how you support students who struggle in your classes? • Tell me about the professional development opportunities you have experienced so far?
4. Tell me your views on equity and inclusion	• Tell me what you think about equity in terms of the ways in which you engage in the classroom/teaching activities • Tell me what you think about inclusion in terms of the ways in which you engage in the classroom/teaching activities

Appendix C

JOURNEY MAPPING INSTRUCTIONS AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

*(Adapted from Annamma, 2013; Fine & Sirin, 2011; Futch & Fine, 2012)

The mapping process:

Journey as a student I want you to draw a picture that depicts your learning experiences in school when you were a student. Draw your relationship with school: what worked, what doesn't, use different colors to show different feelings, use symbols or words. These are just suggestions. Once you finish drawing the picture, you will have a chance to explain it to me.

Journey as a teacher Then I want you to draw a picture that shows your teaching experiences in school, beginning your teacher preparation program. Draw your relationship with school and your preparation program: what worked, what doesn't, use different colors to show different feelings, use symbols or words. These are just suggestions. Once you finish drawing the picture, you will have a chance to explain it to me. This drawing can include:

(a) People like teachers, friends, principles or any other group of people who were involved in school and your education in general

(b) Descriptions of places like where the school was, what did the classroom look like? etc.

(c) Significant events: experiences and memories like obstacles and opportunities on the way. For example, if there were times when you were unable to attend school for period of time you can draw a blank line across the school and draw a picture of what you did instead during that time. Here are some questions that might help you think about some of these experiences and memories

(These instructions will be read to the participant and I will also have a typed copy of the instructions so that the participant may refer to it at any time)

The description and interview process:

Now that you have completed the drawing your journey map, we are going to spend some time talking about what you drew. I am going to ask you a few questions about the drawing. If

you remember other things while we are talking you can add them to the map if you like, or just tell me about it (Annamma, 2013;Kinloch & San Pedro, 2013).

- What does this picture/phrase mean? Can you explain it to me?
- What was your relation with this person like? What did this person do to help you succeed/or limit your success?
- Of these experiences what stands out to you the most? And why?
- Describe your relationship with these people (teachers, parents, peers)? How were those important to you? What kinds of things did they do to help you succeed/or limit your success?
- Describe some areas you have always done well in school? How often did this happen and why?
- Describe some areas you have struggled in school? How often did this happen and why?
- How do you see yourself in future as a teacher? What would you be doing differently in the next 3 to 5 years

Appendix D

Teacher Individual Interviews: Critical Reflection Activity

***(**Adapted from Waitoller, 2011, Dissertation)

For our discussion today I have brought a the video clips you reviwed, excerpts from your written reflections and feedback from students. If necessary I will bring up experiences you shared during our interviews and journey mapping activity. The purpose of this interview is for us to discuss the ways in which different factors mediate the ways in which we understand ourselves as teachers and our teaching activities. We will view these video clips and other data sources through lenses of equity and inclusion and try to identify places our activities reflected equity and inclusion and when they did not. We will discuss why and think about what we can do differently next time.

Questions	Probes
Show a couple of the clips and ask Tell me about this particular clip?	• What stands out to you? • What was the role of the teacher? • What was she trying to accomplish? • What do you think about the decisions the teacher made? • What factors do you think mediated the way the teacher engaged in the classroom: Think about power relations, your own socialization, institutional factors • Tell me about the students in this event • How do you think the student thought about this event?

Questions	Probes
Read a couple of excerpts from students Tell me what you think about these excerpts?	• What stood out to you • What do you think the student is trying to communicate? • How do you think the student views you? • What does this excerpt tell you about you as a teacher? • What does this excerpt tell you about your teaching practices? • How do you think the students experience your teaching activities in line with equity and inclusion? • Now that you know the ways in which students experience teaching activities, what does that make you think about yourself and your teaching activities? • Would you do anything differently?
Read a couple of excerpts of teacher reflections Tell me what you think about these excerpts?	• What stood out to you? • How do you relate to what this teacher is communicating? • What does the excerpt tell you about how this teacher understands herself? • What does the excerpt tell you about the ways she thinks about her teaching activities? • What does this excerpt say about or what did you learn about equity and inclusion?

Appendix E

Student Focus Group Instructions and Prompts

For our group discussion today I have brought a few video clips of teachers teaching. The purpose of this focus groups is for us to discuss your experiences with teachers and their teaching activities. We will view some video clips and talk about them, but before that we will talk about our general experiences. Everything we discuss in this room is confidential.

Questions	Probes
1. Tell me about yourself	• Tell me about yourself (basic demographics) • Tell me about your family • Tell me about the area/village/town you are from • Tell me about your life before, during and after the war • Tell me which track you belong to
2. Tell me about your schooling experiences	• Tell me about your experiences as a student • Tell me about your school • Tell me about the challenges and successes you face as a student
3. Tell me about your experiences with teachers and their teaching activities	• Tell me about the teachers that you like, and why you like them? • Tell me about the teachers whom you don't like and why? • What are the teaching activities that are helpful to you? Give examples. • What are the teaching activities that aren't helpful to you? Give examples • What would you like teachers to know about their teaching activities? • What should they be doing differently?

4. I want you to look at this video clips and tell me tell me your views on equity and inclusion	• What stood out to you and why? • Tell me what you think about equity in terms of the ways in which teachers engage in the classroom/teaching activities • Tell me what you think about inclusion in terms of the ways in which teachers engage in the classroom/teaching activities

Appendix F

Structured Observation Template

Date:	Time:
Teacher being observed:	Classroom and subject:
Duration of observation:	

Teacher Characteristics:

Teacher Activities:

Critical Events: In terms of Equity and Inclusion

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